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KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT  
AND  
OTHER PLAYS



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# *Killycreggs in Twilight*

&

## *Other Plays*

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT  
IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?  
(DRAMA AT INISH)  
BIRD'S NEST

BY

LENNOX ROBINSON — 18111

CENT FRATAP COLLEGE  
SRINAGAR.

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1939

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KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

THE first two acts of this play for Ellen and Philip Barry — Philip, America's most attractive playwright, in whose villa at Cannes this play was imagined last February; but the last act in memory of another fine American author — Edith Wharton, who spurred me to write it in a day in her lovely château at Hyères.

LENNOX ROBINSON

*May 1937*

*Killycreggs in Twilight* was first produced on April 19, 1937, in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, with the following cast:

JUDITH DE LURY . . . . .	Christine Hayden
MARGARET . . . . .	May Craig
SYLVESTER BRANNIGAN . . . . .	Eric Gorman
KIT DE LURY . . . . .	Ria Mooney
LOFTUS DE LURY . . . . .	Cyril Cusack
MRS. PRATT . . . . .	Josephine Fitzgerald
FRANCIS MORGAN . . . . .	W. O'Gorman
DR. PRATT . . . . .	Arthur Shields
JANEY FITZPATRICK . . . . .	Shelah Richards
MOYA FITZPATRICK . . . . .	Aideen O'Connor
SIR JAMES COTTER . . . . .	F. J. M'Cormick

The play was produced by Hugh Hunt.

## CHARACTERS

JUDITH DE LURY.  
KIT DE LURY, *her Sister*.  
LOFTUS DE LURY, *her Nephew*.  
DR. PRATT.  
MRS. PRATT.  
FRANCIS MORGAN.  
MISS FITZPATRICK.  
MISS MOYA FITZPATRICK.  
SYLVESTER BRANNIGAN.  
MARGARET, *a Servant*.  
JULIA, *the Cook*.  
JER CONNOR.  
SIR JAMES COTTER.

The action takes place in a small sitting-room in Killycreggs House, Connemara, Ireland. A few hours elapse between the first and second acts and two weeks between the second and third. The period is the present.

## ACT I

*A small sitting-room, comfortably furnished in good taste in a somewhat old-fashioned way. In one corner is a workman-like desk piled with papers and account books in very neat order. JUDITH DE LURY is sitting at it reading a newspaper. She is a woman of forty-four or forty-five, bigly made but not fat, a harsh handsome face. She is dressed very plainly in some good substantial material, now well worn. It is a June afternoon just after lunch and through the French window we see trees and a garden, but the rain is beginning to fall. Judith looks at the paper, turning the pages idly. Then her eye catches something and she stops, startled. She reads the item — it seems a very short one — she looks into space, gives a little bitter laugh and as she hears a step outside the door throws the paper aside and turns back to the desk and takes up her pen.*

*The parlour-maid, MARGARET, a woman of sixty or older, comes in. She is very properly dressed. She carries a small tray on which is a cup of coffee and a liqueur glass.*

MARGARET. You left the table without your coffee, miss.

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

JUDITH. I had these letters to finish for the post. Put it down.

MARGARET (*putting the coffee on the table*). And there's this (*she holds out the liqueur glass*).

JUDITH. What on earth is that?

MARGARET. 'Tis Cointreau, miss. Miss Kit told me to open a bottle for Master Loftus.

JUDITH (*disapproving*). Well, I declare! Cointreau at lunch!

MARGARET. I know, miss. 'Tis the last bottle.

JUDITH. Take it away; I don't want it. Try and pour it back into the bottle; you'll need a steady hand.

MARGARET. Yes, miss. Isn't he the image of the poor captain?

JUDITH (*grudging*). There's a resemblance.

MARGARET. As like as two peas. And what about the wine for the dinner? Miss Kit gave me no orders.

JUDITH. A bottle of claret, not the best. You know the one I mean.

MARGARET. I do, miss. But wouldn't we be giving the Captain's son the best we could?

JUDITH. Nonsense. He's too young to know good from second-rate.

MARGARET. Yes, miss. And whiskey and soda at ten o'clock? I'll have to send to the village for a siphon.

JUDITH. Not at all. My nephew's too young for whiskeys and sodas — or if he isn't

# I KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

he'll get none in my house. A couple of bottles of beer.

MARGARET. To be sure, miss, much healthier. But his father, the Captain — God rest his soul — always liked his whiskey and soda. I remember it well though I was only kitchen-maid at the time.

JUDITH. Instead of waiting till tea-time to light the drawing-room fire you'd better do it at once. It's setting in for a wet afternoon and Miss Kit and my nephew will be glad of a fire, June and all as it is.

MARGARET. Yes, miss. And — and — and —

JUDITH (*impatiently*). What is it?

MARGARET. If you please, miss, Sylvester Brannigan's still in the kitchen, never went home at all after seeing you. The poor man's in a terrible way. I gev him a cup of tea; he'd like to see you again for a minute.

JUDITH. Not the slightest use. I told him I had made up my mind once and for all.

MARGARET. I told him the same myself, miss. "When the mistress says a thing has got to be, that thing has *got* to be," says I to him.

JUDITH. Go and tell it to him again and tell him to go home to his wife. He needn't work in the garden this afternoon or ever again.

MARGARET. Sure that's what's breaking his heart. . . . I suppose I'll be the next turned away?



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT     ACT

JUDITH. No, Margaret. You're good for another twenty years.

MARGARET. Please God.

*(She turns to go, the glass in her hand when SYLVESTER BRANNIGAN appears in the doorway. An old man, nearer eighty than seventy, very decent, his working clothes are worn but he wears them with dignity. He seems labouring under some strong emotion. MARGARET puts down the glass quickly and makes for the door.)*

MARGARET. Out of this now, Sylvester. You've no right intruding here at all.

SYLVESTER. I know that, I know that, but——

MARGARET *(starting to push him out)*. Away home to Mary, them's the mistress's orders.

SYLVESTER. I'd like to say another word to the mistress.

MARGARET. Not a pin's point of use. Away now!

JUDITH. Stop, Margaret. You can go. *(Muttering something, MARGARET disappears.)* Come in, Sylvester. *(He steps inside the door.)* Now, Sylvester, it's foolishness going on this way. We had the whole thing out this morning. You're too old; you're past your work; I must get a younger man in your place. You won't starve; you've your pension, your cottage, milk and potatoes from the house ——

I            KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

SYLVESTER. Man and boy ———

JUDITH. I know. Man and boy you've been in the de Lurys' garden. Faithfully you've served them and all that sort of thing. I agree. Now you've got to agree with me.

SYLVESTER. Never in all these years have I crossed you, Miss Judith, saving maybe in the matter of them raspberries last October. Sure that plot never raised a raspberry in fifty years.

JUDITH. It's got nothing to do with raspberries or any berry that grows on a bush. The thing is — you're past your work.

SYLVESTER. Who's to be keeping an eye on the young lads in the garden if I go? And them Brophys stealing the apples and the pears?

JUDITH (*grimly*). I'll keep an eye on them and a sharper eye than yours. Now, off home with you.

SYLVESTER. Miss Judith, I'd work me fingers ———

JUDITH. To the bone. I know. That wouldn't be much good to me.

SYLVESTER (*with a touch of defiance*). When I heard in the kitchen that the young master had come home unexpected I said to meself I'd lay the case before him and *he'd* see I'd get justice.

JUDITH. The young master? Who do you mean?

SYLVESTER. Your own brother's son, young Master Loftus.

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT      ACT

JUDITH. He's no more the young master than you are, Sylvester. So put that idea out of your head.

SYLVESTER. Isn't he the young heir?

JUDITH. He's nothing of the sort.

SYLVESTER. I thought ——

JUDITH. You thought wrong. Away home, Sylvester. *(He stands with bent head, trembling. JUDITH turns from him, sees the glass of Cointreau, takes it and brings it to him.)* Drink that down, Sylvester; it'll warm you.

SYLVESTER. What is it, miss? Is it poteen?

JUDITH. No, but it's as good. Drink it down in one gulp, there's not so much of it.

*(He does so, he splutters a little, he lets it run through him.)*

SYLVESTER. God, that's powerful!

JUDITH *(taking the glass from him)*. And now, away with you. I'm very busy.

SYLVESTER. Yes, miss. Long life to you, miss, and may you and all the de Lurys prosper for ever and a day. Maybe I'll see the young master yet and plead me cause.

*(He shambles out. JUDITH shrugs, turns to her desk, sips her coffee and continues a letter. KATHERINE DE LURY ("Kit") comes in. She is forty but looks younger, very prettily dressed in a light summer frock. She goes straight to JUDITH and speaks with some emotion.)*

KIT. That poor man — Sylvester — I met

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him outside the door. Has he been speaking to you again, Judith?

JUDITH. Yes.

KIT. Begging you to let him stay?

JUDITH. Yes.

KIT. And you refused, I suppose, for the sake of saving a few beggarly shillings a week?

JUDITH. There won't be any saving, Kit. He'll get his pension and I must get a new man. But at least I'll get some work done.

KIT. I think it's shameful of you, shameful. He can't last more than a few years. He'd like to have died in harness, he'd like to have died still serving the de Lurys.

JUDITH. Depend upon it, in a few weeks he'll be strutting round like a gentleman, so pleased to be out of harness and belittling everything the new man does. I should have sacked him five years ago but I was too soft.

KIT. Soft!

*(There is a strained silence.)*

JUDITH. What has happened to Loftus?

KIT. He stepped out to have a look at the garden.

JUDITH. Better call him in; it's starting to rain quite heavily; he'll get his smart Dublin suit destroyed. There'll be a fire in the drawing-room in half an hour; I told Margaret to put a match to it.

*(KIT goes towards the French window.)*

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT      ACT

KIT. Isn't he a charming boy? Aren't you a little proud of having a nephew like that?

JUDITH. Hm! I can't judge after one lunch. He rattles away. Of course you've known him for years.

KIT (*opening the window*). The nicest boy —

JUDITH. Just a minute. I have to give Julia some orders. While I'm away find out what he's come here for. Unknown nephews don't come all the way from Dublin to Connemara on the heels of a telegram for nothing.

KIT. His mother always refused to let him come here before. But he's the sweetest —

JUDITH. I don't think it's good manners coming uninvited, but you needn't tell him so, I'll tell him myself if it's necessary.

KIT. Yes, Judith. (*She opens the window and calls.*) Loftus!

LOFTUS' VOICE. Yes, Aunt Kit?

KIT. Come in, dear; you'll be soaked.

JUDITH. O'Neill's bill is two pounds bigger than last month.

KIT (*not interested*). Is it?

JUDITH. And what have you been getting from McEntees?

KIT. I forget.

(LOFTUS DE LURY *appears at the window, a presentable young man of eighteen.*)

LOFTUS. Gee! It's starting in, in real earnest.

JUDITH. Please scrape your shoes.

LOFTUS. Where?

JUDITH. You're standing on a wire mat.

LOFTUS. So I am. Dumb of me not to notice, Aunt Judith. Sorry. (*He scrapes and comes in.*) It's just perfect, Aunt Judith.

JUDITH. What is?

LOFTUS. The façade of the house from the garden. And what a garden! Those roses! And the terraces down to the river.

JUDITH. I'm leaving you for a few minutes, Loftus. I'll be back then to hear your business — I mean to know why you've paid us this unexpected visit.

LOFTUS (*a little dashed*). Yes, Aunt Judith.

(*JUDITH goes out.*)

LOFTUS. I'm awfully sorry about not wiping my shoes, Aunt Kit. Is she very vexed?

KIT. Not at all. Sit there.

LOFTUS (*sitting*). Cigarette?

KIT. I don't, you know, and you mustn't in here, not in Judith's room. There's the library and the dining-room. I'm sorry.

LOFTUS. Doesn't matter. Gosh, I'm afraid of her.

KIT. You mustn't be afraid of your Aunt Judith.

LOFTUS. I thought she'd be like you, Aunt Kit. Soft and — and lovely.

KIT. Now wouldn't it bore you to have two aunts like peas in a pod?

LOFTUS. There couldn't be too many like

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you — but then again there couldn't be another like you.

KIT. You've a sluthering tongue, Loftus, but don't try it on Judith, she doesn't like blarney.

LOFTUS. I'll be just a yes-man with her. She has me scared stiff.

KIT. I like sluther. I like people to be kind and nice and make everything nice for everyone.

LOFTUS. And you've got the touch, Aunt Kit. We always have grand times when you come to Dublin, don't we?

KIT. Yes. I think I can manage the Horse Show this summer.

LOFTUS (*troubled*). Oh!

KIT. Won't it suit your mother?

LOFTUS. I — don't know.

KIT. I'll write to her. If it doesn't suit — what matter? But tell me, what brings you here all of a sudden? Any time you were asked before your mother wouldn't let you come. What's the trouble?

LOFTUS. Trouble is the word, Aunt Kit.

KIT. *You're* not in trouble, Loftus?

LOFTUS. I certainly am, as bad as can be.

KIT (*scared*). Not debts again? I've practically no money.

LOFTUS. No, ducky, not a debt in the world. But Mother's going to marry again.

KIT. Edith — your mother — marrying again? Well, what a surprise!

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LOFTUS. It certainly is. Imagine anyone wanting to marry Mother!

KIT. She's very pretty. (LOFTUS *shrugs*.) And still quite young. Not forty, not nearly forty.

LOFTUS. Thirty-eight next November.

KIT. As much as that? She doesn't look a day more than twenty-five. Who is she marrying?

LOFTUS. A horror called Edwards. Look, Aunt Kit, you know Mother and I dislike each other heartily —

KIT. Oh no, you couldn't dislike your mother.

LOFTUS. I can and do. And this man Edwards just gives me a pain and—well, you see how impossible the situation is.

KIT. I'm sure you'll grow to like him.

LOFTUS. And I want two hundred pounds.

KIT. Oh, it *is* debts!

LOFTUS. Not on your life. I once owed four pounds nine and sixpence and you, like the doaty aunt you are, gave me a fiver, I've never been a pound in debt since. But now I must get away, I couldn't live with Mother and beastly Edwards. I've a chance of starting a garage with another fellow, a chap called Murphy, but I've got to put two hundred pounds into it.

KIT. Your mother wouldn't —?

LOFTUS. Not a shilling. That's been her



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policy all along—educate me, dress me decently, feed me and keep me dependent. Ten shillings a week pocket-money — it hardly keeps me in Woodbines. She went off the handle when I asked her for two hundred pounds and to be quit of me till kingdom come. Murphy had to advance me my fare down here.

KIT. I thought she was going to get you into ——

LOFTUS. She's always on the point of "getting me into" something, but it never comes to anything.

KIT. She's always been so nice to me.

LOFTUS. Everyone's nice to you, Aunt Kit; why shouldn't they be? But you and Aunt Judith are the only relations I have in the world on Father's side, so after the flare-up I had with Mother last night I suddenly made up my mind I'd come to you. It will only be a loan, you know, but maybe a couple of years before I can pay it back. I was sure you'd give it to me like a shot, but after meeting Aunt Judith — well, I'm not so sure.

KIT. Everything here is hers, I've only a little allowance for housekeeping and for myself — but it can be done, I'm sure. We're not rich, Loftus, but we're not paupers. Of course the Land Commission treated us shamefully, taking all that land. Daylight robbery, Loftus, daylight robbery. But Judith makes the farm pay and I run the house very economically ——

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LOFTUS. You gave me a swell luncheon.

KIT. Oh, nothing. All our own stuff. . . .  
But I don't like you going into a garage, Loftus.  
It seems very low and smelly for a de Lury.

LOFTUS. Oh, I wouldn't be driving cars; just  
managing.

KIT. If we could only get you into some-  
thing —

LOFTUS. I'm sick of waiting to be got into  
something. 'Smatter of fact I've only a second-  
rate education plus a year at the School of Art  
at night and I was no good at that. . . . Will  
Aunt Judith object to the garage idea?

KIT. Not because it's a garage. She's dread-  
fully little idea of what is becoming to a de Lury  
though she does love this place so.

LOFTUS. Who could help loving Killycreggs?  
If I could only have been brought up here in-  
stead of in Ailesbury Road!

KIT. You'd have loved it?

LOFTUS. I certainly would. . . . I don't think  
she likes me.

KIT. Oh, don't say that — she must. Every-  
one likes you. You have a touch of the de Lury  
charm. You remind me of Father — and of  
your own father.

LOFTUS. Aunt Judith hasn't much charm,  
anyway.

KIT. No, people do rather dislike Judith —  
I mean she's not popular. She's hard and stingy  
about money.

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LOFTUS. I bet everyone likes you.

KIT. Do you know, they do, Loftus. Everyone's so kind. And I like everyone — nearly everyone — and I want everyone to be happy and have what they want and ——

LOFTUS. And why on earth did you never get married?

KIT (*laughing*). Now isn't that funny, Loftus? Simply I didn't care about the one or two who asked me — I was never in love in my life. Of course when I was just grown-up there was the War, and your father was killed and then there were the Troubles, so perhaps I hadn't much chance; anyhow I was forty last month and I'm an old maid, but I'm not going to be a "character," not for another twenty years, and if anyone very nice comes along I'll marry him, but I'm not going husband-hunting.

LOFTUS. Myopic, I call them.

KIT. Who? What?

LOFTUS. The very nice fellows round here. Blind!

KIT. Nonsense. Now Judith had her romance.

LOFTUS. You don't say? The local pig-butcher?

KIT. No, but almost as unsuitable. Oh, years ago, during the War, a "fly-boy" — that's what we called them, men who ran away from England to escape conscription. We were staying all the summer in a little place in

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Donegal and he was there painting and he wanted to marry Judith.

LOFTUS. Maybe she was prettier then.

KIT. She was considered very handsome, and she liked pictures.

LOFTUS. Did she?

KIT. Yes, and she sang quite well — she never sings now — but of course Father wouldn't hear of it, the man was nothing — nothing — a tradesman's son from Birmingham, I think, and a fly-boy, and your father in the army and dear father a retired general, and this man an artist, quite young and undistinguished — it wouldn't have done at all for a de Lury. Though I believe he did get on quite well afterwards, I've sometimes seen his name in the papers.

LOFTUS. What was his name?

KIT. James Cotter.

LOFTUS (*sitting up straight*). I suppose you don't by any chance mean James Mansfield Cotter?

KIT. Yes, I remember the Mansfield. Have you ever heard of him?

LOFTUS (*ironic*). Yes, I think I *have* heard of him, just once or twice. He only happens to be the greatest — You've read to-day's paper?

KIT. Not yet. Why?

LOFTUS. The birthday honours are out. He's knighted.

KIT. He's *Sir* James Cotter?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT     ACT

LOFTUS. Yes, not that that means a thing to him.

KIT (*looking at the paper*). Oh, I wonder has Judith seen it.

LOFTUS. Would she feel it? Mind?

KIT. I don't think so; it's such years ago, and I think he's married. There's a portfolio of his drawings lying round somewhere; he gave them to Judith when he went away.

LOFTUS. A portfolio of early Cotters! Gee! It's rich to think of grandfather giving James Cotter a kick in the pants.

KIT. Of course he had to.

LOFTUS. Sure. Where are they?

KIT. I don't know. I haven't seen them for years.

LOFTUS. I certainly will. They should be worth money.

KIT. Really? But about your money — I'm sure that will be all right; you're the heir of Killycreggs to all intents and purposes. But Judith will have to know all the particulars, she's so tight about money, Loftus. I was quite cross with her this afternoon because she dismissed our old gardener — he's been with us for more than fifty years—just to save a few pounds a month.

LOFTUS. What a rotten shame!

KIT. I slipped him a pound — out of the housekeeping money. Poor fellow, he tried to kiss my hand.

## KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

LOFTUS. You're a peach, Aunt Kit.

MARGARET (*opening the door*). Mrs. Pratt.

(MRS. PRATT *enters*. *She is a hearty woman in the early forties*. MARGARET *disappears*.)

KIT. Ah, Mrs. Pratt!

MRS. PRATT (*kissing her heartily*). How are you, me dear?

KIT. This is my nephew, Loftus de Lury.

MRS. PRATT (*shaking hands*). I'm glad to meet you. Often I've heard your aunt singing your praises, and, indeed, as far as looks go, you didn't tell me a word too much, Kit.

KIT. Now, Loftus, mind you live up to my report. (*To Mrs. Pratt*) Won't you sit down?

MRS. PRATT. Only for a minute; I've not come for a chat. I'm just a beggar, Kit, a common beggar.

KIT. And what is it this time?

MRS. PRATT (*to LOFTUS*). Listen to her! Doesn't she know me well! Sure, Mr. de Lury, if you know anything about the country you'll know that a doctor's wife has to be part and parcel of every charity in the district. Bazaars for this thing and that, dances for the hunt fowl-fund, tennis for the district nurse, badminton tournaments for I forget what, bridge-drives for free milk for the schools, Christmas-trees for the reformatory and pony-races for the love of God.

KIT. And this time?

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MRS. PRATT. The convent bazaar, me dear. Tuesday week as ever is.

KIT. I've embroidered some cushion covers for Mrs. Madden's stall. I think they're hideous.

MRS. PRATT. They'll go like hot cakes, me dear. Anything coming from the de Lurys of Killycreggs is a treasure. Why wouldn't it be? The oldest family in the country.

KIT. I forget: what are you?

MRS. PRATT. Country produce, dear.

KIT. Oh, of course.

MRS. PRATT. I was at the Fitzpatrick's this morning, begging. Lady Fitzpatrick was looking lovely.

KIT. Oh, they're back?

MRS. PRATT. Yes, and quite a house-party. Lady P. *nearly* asked me to lunch.

KIT. Have you had no lunch? I could get —

MRS. PRATT. Don't trouble, me dear. I went on to Colonel Stoker's and they were *at* lunch, so I had a bite with them.

KIT. Did you get much?

MRS. PRATT. Only a cutlet, dear, and a few strawberries and a teeny glass of sherry.

KIT. I meant — for your stall.

MRS. PRATT. Oh, Lady Fitzpatrick was lovely, offered me the world and all, but she says the new gardener is a tartar, will hardly give her a thing for the house, let alone a bazaar, and I

I            KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

suppose it will end up the way it ended last year — half a dozen heads of lettuce. Still, she's promised to come herself and bring the party.

KIT. And the Stokers?

MRS. PRATT. Broad beans, me dear; not another thing. Aren't people terrible mean, Mr. de Lury?

KIT. I wonder what we can give you. There'll still be lots of strawberries; we'll send you all we have, and we've lovely peas — I won't insult you with broad beans —

MRS. PRATT. Sure I'll be bloated with broad beans. Most people are like the Stokers — not an idea higher than a broad bean.

KIT. I wonder is the asparagus over. And Judith has wonderful currants this year —

MRS. PRATT. Any chickens or ducks?

KIT. Of course. I forgot. How many?

MRS. PRATT. As many as you can spare. They always go like — like the way chickens and ducks do go.

KIT. I'm sure we could manage three pair of each.

MRS. PRATT. You're a darling, Kit; if everyone was like you, and I know your word's as good as your bond.

(JUDITH comes in. She greets MRS. PRATT civilly but not cordially.)

JUDITH. How-do-you-do, Mrs. Pratt?

MRS. PRATT. Delighted to see you, Miss de Lury. I'm not calling; just begging.



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT      ACT

JUDITH. What do you want?

MRS. PRATT. I'm country produce.

(JUDITH *stares.*)

KIT. It's her country produce stall, Judith, for the convent bazaar. I've promised her strawberries and asparagus ———

JUDITH. Finished. I won't let another head be cut.

KIT. And peas.

JUDITH. You can have some elderly ones.

MRS. PRATT. And ———

JUDITH. Mrs. Pratt, I'll give you anything I can for the convent bazaar; but I have a weekly contract with Mr. Morgan's hotel to supply him with vegetables and fruit. I can't afford to let him down — not even for your convent bazaar.

MRS. PRATT. I see.

KIT. A few ducks and chickens, Judith?

JUDITH. Not a duck nor a chicken.

MRS. PRATT. I see.

JUDITH. Lettuce and broad beans — yes. The lettuce is on the point of bolting but that can't be helped, and there are radishes — maybe a little stringy ———

MRS. PRATT. Ah, sure, I don't believe you, Miss de Lury; you're pulling me leg. I know everything you send will be tip-top, like the last time. Sure the de Lurys couldn't do a mean thing, 'tis not in their nature.

JUDITH. Don't be too sure.

# I KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

(MARGARET puts her head in through the door.)

MARGARET. If you please, Miss Kit ——

KIT (*going to the door*). Yes, Margaret?

MARGARET. A minute, miss.

(*They disappear.*)

MRS. PRATT (*genteelly*). And how do you like Killycreggs, Mr. de Lury?

LOFTUS. I love it, what I've seen of it, but I only got here just before lunch. I came from Dublin by the morning mail.

MRS. PRATT. The house is chawming, isn't it? Of course the Fitzpatricks have a caastle.

JUDITH. Built in eighteen-forty.

MRS. PRATT. Yes. Nearly a hundred years old. Fauncy!

LOFTUS. How old are we — I mean, you — Killycreggs, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. They pulled down the old castle — it was just a square keep — about seventeen-sixty; there's the remains of it still in the yard, part of the stables.

MRS. PRATT. Them old Irish caastles were very vulgar.

LOFTUS. I'll have to do a lot of exploring.

MRS. PRATT. There's a plethora of nice families in the neighbourhood, Mr. de Lury, and a very nice claus of people staying in the summer for the fishing. 'Tis one of the most select places in the west. I hear Francey Morgan's hotel is raging this summer, Miss

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT    ACT

de Lury. Sir Valentine Flower is there again and Lord John Harvey.

JUDITH. Who are they?

MRS. PRATT. I don't quite know — but sort of lords. My girl got a squint at the visitor's book the other day. Of course their sort is little good to the country: fish all day and off to bed at ten o'clock. Still, they give a tone to the place and bring money.

KIT (*coming back*). Have you got any change, Judith?

JUDITH. I think so. Why?

KIT. Dinny Roche is here with a lovely little salmon — just nine pounds. It will be nice for dinner tonight, a treat for Loftus.

JUDITH. You had a pound from me this morning.

KIT. I know. But it's gone. (*JUDITH goes to her desk and gives her a note.*) Thanks. (*She goes to the door*) Margaret! (*MARGARET appears.*) It's how much — let me see? Nine pounds at —? Oh, tell him to keep the change.

MARGARET. Yes, miss.

(*She disappears.*)

MRS. PRATT (*pensively*). I've hardly tasted salmon this year; the doctor's been fishing only once or twice. I think he should give up your fishing, Miss de Lury; it's not worth what he pays for it. He's so busy. 'Tis a nuisance the way people are always getting ill; you'd think they did it to annoy him.

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KIT. Maybe you'd both come to dinner tonight — do. Loftus will be bored sitting opposite two old aunts.

LOFTUS. Now, what am I to say to that?

JUDITH. I agree, Loftus. An impossible remark to answer. . . . Yes, do come, Mrs. Pratt. I always like seeing the doctor.

MRS. PRATT. Are you sure it won't put you out?

KIT. Not at all.

MRS. PRATT. Would you be mad with me if I brought you over a cucumber? Our cucumbers are luscious this year, and I always say, "What's salmon without a cuke?"

JUDITH. Thank you, but we have our own.

KIT. We've even started on the melons.

MRS. PRATT. Oh, that's gorgeous.

JUDITH. But they all go to Mr. Morgan's hotel; we haven't tasted one ourselves yet.

MRS. PRATT. Console yourself, Mrs. Pratt; think of them going down the aristocratic throats of Sir Valentine and Lord — whatever his name is.

KIT (*impulsively*). Oh, Sir —

(*She looks at the newspaper on the floor.*)

JUDITH. I know what you're thinking, Kit. Yes, I read it. It's comic, isn't it? I hope Father gets a paper in heaven, or wherever he is.

KIT. Judith!

JUDITH. It wouldn't matter to Lofty —

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your father, Loftus, I mean. Lofty, my brother, wasn't a snob; he was only utterly stupid. Sorry, Mrs. Pratt, you don't know what we're talking about. It's only that I was engaged years ago, for two days, to a man my father and brother thought utterly beneath me in birth and profession, and now he's been knighted. I'd have been a Lady today, I mean a real Lady.

MRS. PRATT. Is that so? Well, I never! Isn't that awful? To think what you've missed!

JUDITH. I expect I'll cry myself to sleep.

MRS. PRATT. Who was he?

JUDITH. No one you ever heard of.

LOFTUS. He's a great artist, Aunt Judith.

JUDITH (*pleased*). Is that true? You know him?

LOFTUS. Only his work. He's — of course it's hard to judge contemporaries — but surely he'll be among the greatest.

MRS. PRATT. Only an artist? Sort of drawing? Still, I'd be frantic, missing being a Lady.

(FRANCIS MORGAN *comes in unannounced.*

*A large handsome man of fifty with a genial, intelligent face.*)

JUDITH (*shaking hands warmly*). Oh, Francis!

MORGAN. Good-day, Judith. Good-day, Kit. And Mrs. Pratt. How are you, ma'am?

(*He shakes hands with her. She shakes hands very stiffly. He looks at LOFTUS.*)

KIT. My nephew from Dublin. This is Mr. Morgan, Loftus.

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MORGAN (*shaking hands warmly*). Glad to meet any nephew of Miss Judith's.

LOFTUS. How-do-you-do?

MORGAN. I'm on my way from Brophy's auction, Judith. I bought you the harrow and a couple of good spades and a broken-down hen-run, but it can be mended—all dirt cheap.

JUDITH. Thank you, Francis.

MORGAN (*to MRS. PRATT*). How's the boss?

MRS. PRATT (*in her most genteel manner*). The doctor is quate well, thank you.

MORGAN. I'm glad to hear that. He's bound to be busy; there's a lot of petty illness knocking around, but sure that's all to his own good. I hear he's looking for a new car. Ah, well, one fellow's illness is another fellow's motor-car.

MRS. PRATT. My little run-about ——

MORGAN. Is really on its last tyres. And the doctor's got to get you a brand new baby Austin and a second-hand Ford for himself. I heard all about it in Ballycarrig.

MRS. PRATT. I believe your hotel is doing quate well this summer. It's extraordinary the places people go to nowadays.

MORGAN. We're flourishing, ma'am, flourish-ing. Too many singles, that's the worst of it.

KIT. Singles?

MORGAN. Unattached men and women — must have rooms to themselves — even a share of the married couples — I don't know what

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the world's coming to at all, and when the single rooms give out they take up rooms with a double bed or twins — terrible waste of space. Next time I build a hotel I'll have nothing but singles.

JUDITH. Are you going to have a look at my young cattle, Francis?

MORGAN. Yes, Judith, on my way back from Bolton's. But it will be six or later before I get back here.

JUDITH. Oh, then stay on and have some dinner. Mrs. Pratt and the doctor are coming.

*(This invitation is a surprise to MRS. PRATT and KIT. They don't like it.)*

MORGAN *(a little embarrassed)*. Ah, I couldn't, Judith, I couldn't.

JUDITH. Why not? You'll be missing your dinner at the hotel.

MORGAN. I can always get a peck.

JUDITH. Do stay, please. There's plenty of food, Kit?

KIT. I suppose so.

MORGAN. Then, thank you; I will. It's kind of you to ask me, Judith.

MRS. PRATT *(very stiff)*. Indeed I'm not certain if the doctor can manage it, he's so overwhelmed with work. I think perhaps you shouldn't count on us, Miss de Lury.

JUDITH. What a pity! The salmon will be so disappointed.

MRS. PRATT. I forgot the salmon. . . . Well,

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I'll try and persuade the doctor. And now I must fly. Oh, Mr. Morgan, our convent bazaar next week —

MORGAN. Not in my parish, Mrs. Pratt, not in my parish. Our own bazaar is threatening in a month's time. I'm reserving my generosity for it.

MRS. PRATT. I see. . . . Goodbye for the present, Miss de Lury.

KIT. We'll see you tonight, I hope.

MRS. PRATT (*with a stiff bow to MORGAN, making for the door*). Maybe.

KIT. Loftus!

(*He opens the door and follows MRS. PRATT out.*)

MORGAN (*laughing*). The creature! She couldn't stomach you asking me to dinner, Judith. She to sit at the same table with the manager of the general shop in Ballycarrig and the proprietor of the fishing hotel! And in the company of the real quality — the de Lurys! And sure, God Almighty, she herself was only a publican's daughter from Ballinaslow.

KIT. She's a very kind woman, Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN. Ah, kindness be damned. She's a scrounger. Her hand always in your pocket for a subscription, her mouth always hanging open for a free meal. The poor doctor! Well, she cot him as many a better man has been cot. . . . But, Judith, before I go, for I mightn't have a chance at dinner tonight with all the



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high-and-mighty there — I've big complaints to make.

JUDITH. About what?

MORGAN. Them last peas — cotton-wool.

JUDITH. Francis! They weren't bigger than— than —

MORGAN. Dumb-bells, Judith, dumb-bells.

JUDITH. The teeniest little peas that ever left their pods.

MORGAN. And there were worrums in the white cabbage.

JUDITH. There certainly were not.

MORGAN. Sir Valentine found one on his plate. Of course it was boiled dead — the poor, innocent little creature.

JUDITH. You've a bad cook, Francis, a slatterly, idle, incompetent old woman. I've told you so time and again. You come here complaining of my lovely vegetables and the fault lies in your own kitchen. Why aren't you man enough to hunt her?

MORGAN. I'm in dread of her, Judith, in dread of her, and that's the truth.

JUDITH. Of course you are. Why aren't you in dread of me?

MORGAN. I dunno.

KIT. I think you're being very rude to my sister, Mr. Morgan. I wish Judith would give up sending you her old vegetables.

MORGAN (*with a grin*). Old! That's the very word.

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JUDITH. For shame, Francis.

MORGAN. I take that back, Judith; most times they're grand. If anything your new potatoes are too good; we can't boil enough of them to fill the fishers. I wish I'd any sort of an hotel except the sort that gives people such appetites. Connemara air is damnably hungry.

JUDITH. I've a row of peas just in; I'll have it stripped for you this afternoon. You can take them back in your car, and there are three pair of ducks being plucked.

MORGAN. Noble, Julia, noble. I have a cheque for you for last month's account.

JUDITH. Good. Give it to me. (*He does so.*) I'll make you out a receipt.

MORGAN. You're looking very bright and well, Miss Kit.

KIT (*primly*). I'm quite well, thank you, Mr. Morgan.

MORGAN. Is the nephew staying long?

KIT. I'm not sure. I hope so.

MORGAN. I've never met him. A brother's son?

KIT. Yes. My only brother. His father was killed in the War — just before Loftus was born. He's lived always in Dublin with his mother.

MORGAN. He looks a handy boy.

KIT. The best boy in the world.

JUDITH (*with the receipt*). There, Francis.

MORGAN. Thanks. I'll be off. I'll see you later.

(*He goes.*)

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KIT. I can't bear that man.

JUDITH. Why not?

KIT. So bumptious and vulgar, and calling you "Judith".

JUDITH. I call him "Francis".

KIT. Who began it?

JUDITH. "It?" Christian-naming? He did, of course.

KIT. Of course. And the way he abused your lovely vegetables.

JUDITH. That was half fun.

KIT. Hm! Giving him the best of everything and sending tough lettuces and old peas to the convent bazaar.

JUDITH. That was my half fun. Mrs. Pratt will get the best I can spare, but Francis pays for what he gets.

KIT. I always think that, just because we're Protestants, if we do give to Roman Catholic charities we should give the very best we can. . . . And then, asking him to dinner! He's never dined here before. I don't mind an odd cup of tea. I know he advises you about the farm and he deserves his cup of tea, but dinner —

JUDITH. Why not?

KIT. The Pratts are coming.

JUDITH. Ellie Pratt is twice as vulgar as Francis; the doctor is different.

KIT. He's partly de Lury.

JUDITH. Exactly. He's too much of a

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gentleman to mind sitting at dinner with the proprietor of the Ballycarrig Hotel. I only wish to goodness Mrs. Pratt wouldn't come, but I don't believe she'll be able to resist the salmon.

KIT. Sprawling all over the sofa with his pipe in his hand. It's a wonder to me he didn't smoke it.

JUDITH. I forgot to ask him to.

KIT. He's no idea of his place, and you do nothing to put him in it.

JUDITH. I wonder what *is* his place. He's self-made, he's rich, he's intelligent. He reads, he knows more about music than I do. . . . How would you like him for a brother-in-law, Kit?

KIT. A what?

JUDITH. A brother-in-law. He wants to marry me.

KIT. Well, of all the —! You should order him from the house.

JUDITH. And lose a good customer? No, my dear.

KIT. You'd demean yourself; you, a de Lury, you'd allow a — a — Morgan — a country shopkeeper to — to pay attention to you — to dream for an instant — to let him dream —

JUDITH. You'd take it so badly —?

KIT. "It?" How do you mean "it"? You're surely not meaning for an instant —?

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JUDITH. I haven't said "no". (*KIT gazes at her in horror. JUDITH laughs.*) But I haven't said "yes".

KIT. I see. You're just teasing me. If Father was alive, he'd turn him from the house.

JUDITH (*bitterly*). Yes, Father was very successful in turning my suitors from the house.

KIT. I'd never hold up my head again.

JUDITH. Or speak to me again?

KIT (*impulsively, going to her and kissing her*). I'd love you, always, Judith, whatever you'd do. But it's only a joke; you're only teasing, aren't you? (*JUDITH laughs up at her and presses her hand. KIT's face clears.*) There! I knew you weren't in earnest. I'll run away. I've lots to do.

(*She goes out. JUDITH sighs, rings the bell and goes back to her desk. MARGARET comes in.*)

JUDITH. There'll be the salmon for dinner, Margaret; boiled. Is there any white wine left?

MARGARET. I believe there's a bottle — or maybe two — of Graves. (*The word has a sepulchral sound.*)

JUDITH. Very well, serve it with the fish, and then a bottle — two bottles of the best claret with the lamb, and whiskey and soda afterwards.

MARGARET. Yes, miss. Who's coming, miss?

JUDITH. The doctor and Mrs. Pratt.

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MARGARET. Sure the poor doctor touches nothing.

JUDITH. Mr. Morgan is coming too.

MARGARET. Francey Morgan! Francey Morgan sitting down to dinner in Killycreggs!

JUDITH. Tell Julia not to overboil the salmon as she did the last time. Do you know where my nephew is?

MARGARET. Wandering round the house, miss, opening every door there is, going into every room. A lovely young gentleman, Master Loftus. It's like old times to have a de Lury man round the house.

JUDITH. If you see him, ask him to come and see me here in about an hour's time. I must go to the garden and get some more vegetables sent in. *(She goes to the door, passing*

MARGARET. *She speaks from outside the door.)*  
Oh, Margaret!

MARGARET. Yes, miss?

JUDITH. There'll be a melon for dessert.

*(MARGARET gapes after her.)*

CURTAIN

## ACT II

*The same scene a couple of hours later. But now the sun is shining brightly outside and into the room. JUDITH and LOFTUS are sitting.*

LOFTUS. So that's the whole idea, Aunt Judith.

JUDITH. It seems to me a wild-cat scheme. This man Murphy you want to go into partnership with is as young as yourself and almost as inexperienced. If I had two hundred pounds to invest — which I haven't — I'd put it into something that would bring me four per cent.

LOFTUS. So you won't help me at all?

JUDITH. Not in that way. I like you for wanting to work, I like you for wanting to get away from your mother — a woman I have always heartily disliked.

LOFTUS. Aunt Kit was sure you'd help me. As she reminded me — I'm practically the heir here.

JUDITH. She had no right to say that. This place is mine to do what I like with. I could will it away tomorrow to the Protestant Orphans — and I've a great mind to do so.

LOFTUS. Oh, it wasn't in my head, Aunt Judith — being the heir, I mean. I hardly

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thought of Killycreggs till I saw it for the first time today.

JUDITH. Well, put it out of your head.

LOFTUS. Yes, Aunt Judith. But it's a peach of a house, isn't it?

JUDITH. It's good enough.

LOFTUS. It's a little beauty. I've always loved the small Georgian, and it's all so perfectly kept. Georgian's got to be svelte. Gothic can afford to go into picturesque ruins, but Georgian can't be too smart.

JUDITH. We polish and clean — (*A telephone bell is heard in the distance.*) Bad luck to it, there's the phone again.

LOFTUS. Aren't you very up-to-date, Aunt Judith, having a telephone?

JUDITH. A necessity, Loftus. I'm a business woman. I'm "country produce", as Mrs. Pratt would say.

(MARGARET *appears.*)

MARGARET. Francey Morgan's hotel on the phone, Miss.

JUDITH. All right. Don't run away, Loftus. I'll be back in a minute.

(*She goes out followed by MARGARET. LOFTUS strolls about looking at the room and ends up with his back to the French window. A young man appears outside it in shirt-sleeves, a rake in his hand. His name is JER CONNOR.*)

JER. I beg your pardon, sir.



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LOFTUS (*turning, a little startled*). Oh! What?

JER. 'Tis only me, sir. Only Jer Connor, sir.

LOFTUS. Yes?

JER. If I might make so bold, sir — 'tis just to bid you welcome home.

LOFTUS. How do you know who I am?

JER. Sure it's gone round the whole place like wild-fire that the young master has come home.

LOFTUS. I'm afraid this isn't my home, Jer; I live in Dublin.

JER (*with contempt*). Yerra, that ould place! Sure what would the de Lurys want with Dublin except for a spree an odd time? 'Tis here they have been years out of mind and 'tis here they have the right to be. But I was wondering, sir, would it please you to come out after rabbits tonight?

LOFTUS. Rabbits?

JER. Yes, sir. Before your dinner. The north field's alive with them.

LOFTUS. I don't know how to shoot.

JER (*astonished*). You what?

LOFTUS. I've never had a gun in my hand.

JER. Well, glory be to God! Sure, what matter, I have a gun the mistress gev to me to try to banish the vermin.

LOFTUS. You'll have to teach me.

JER. I warrant you'll be the apt pupil. I'm told the de Lurys were always prime shots.

II KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

(JULIA, the cook, a large handsome woman very neatly dressed in blue with a large white apron, puts her head in at the door. She speaks in a hushed voice.)

JULIA. It might be trifle, might it?

LOFTUS. Trifle?

JULIA. For the sweet.

LOFTUS. What sweet, sweet?

JULIA. I told Margaret to ask you what sweet would be your fancy for the dinner.

LOFTUS. She forgot. . . . Oh, not trifle; I get that at every second-rate dance in Dublin. Ireland's national dish!

JULIA. Well, be quick and tell me. Herself's in the little room telephoning. She'll murder me if she catches me here.

LOFTUS. An omelette — a jam omelette.

JULIA (*eagerly*). With our own fresh strawberry jam, not two weeks made, lashings of it? The very thing. I can toss an omelette with the best.

(*And she escapes.*)

LOFTUS (*to JER*). The cook?

JER. Ould Julia Mahony. . . . And have you seen the bit of river, the prettiest mile of water in the country? Many's the fine fish cem out of it.

LOFTUS. Did there? You fish there?

JER (*grinning*). Sure that's not a question you'd be asking me, sir.

LOFTUS. No? Why?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

JER. Well — you know — ah, what matter, sir.

(JUDITH comes back.)  
JUDITH. Who's that? Jer! Do you want something?

JER. No, miss. I was only bidding Master Loftus welcome to Killycreggs.

JUDITH. Well, away back to your work. You've plenty to do; that walk beyond the rose-garden is in a shocking state.

JER. Yes, miss. I'll have it as neat as a new pin before dusk.

(He disappears.)

LOFTUS. He wants me to go out with him after rabbits before dinner. May I, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Of course, but don't be late for dinner.

LOFTUS. Fancy, I've never had a gun in my hand, I've never fished, and he says the bit of river here is *AI* for fishing. Is it, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Yes, but you can't touch it. Doctor Pratt has the fishing. I let it to him every year.

LOFTUS. Oh . . . could I go shooting other things — pheasants and woodcock and —

JUDITH. Don't be ridiculous. In June!

LOFTUS. Oh. Aren't they in — in season or something? You mustn't be vexed with me; I don't know anything about country things; I'm awfully ignorant.

JUDITH. It's more useful for you to know

about motors than about salmon and cock. If you're as capable a motorist as you say you are, I think I can get you a job near here.

LOFTUS. Yes?

JUDITH. In Mr. Morgan's hotel — the man that came in after lunch. He has four cars to take his guests about. I know he wants an assistant in his garage.

LOFTUS. An assistant? But Dick Murphy and I were going to run our own. I don't think I'd like to be just an assistant, Aunt Judith.

JUDITH. Why not? Wouldn't learning your trade, getting a salary — even if it's a small one — the run of your teeth and a free bed be better than risking money which you haven't got, which you must borrow and probably lose on a venture which may fail in three months?

LOFTUS (*strolling to the window*). Of course the country down here is lovely. I'd adore to try to paint it. Look at the way the sun has come out now, and how it glistens on the wet laurels. It's beautiful.

JUDITH. Beauty isn't the question. I'm offering you a job.

LOFTUS. Mr. Morgan mightn't take me.

JUDITH. He'll take you on trial if I tell him to.

LOFTUS. Would I live here, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Certainly not. His hotel is fifteen miles away.

LOFTUS. I'd love to live here.

JUDITH. Put Killycreggs out of your mind,

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

Loftus. It has nothing to do with you.

LOFTUS. I know it hasn't, but I keep forgetting. That's a lovely drawing of it — that one.

*(He points to an old-fashioned drawing.)*

JUDITH. My mother did it. I'm told she was a good artist. Of course she never had much chance — married at eighteen, three babies, and dead at twenty-four.

LOFTUS. Ah. . . . Oh, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Yes?

LOFTUS. Aunt Kit said you had some early sketches by James Cotter. Have you?

JUDITH. Yes.

LOFTUS. Aunt Kit didn't know where they were. Do you know?

JUDITH. Of course. They're here *(indicating a drawer in her desk)*.

LOFTUS. Oh, could I see them? *(She opens the drawer and hands him an old portfolio. He opens it eagerly.)* By gum! Cotter in every line! . . . Oh, what a little beauty! And these two young women on the sands . . . you and Aunt Kit? . . . and this stunning head. It's — is it you, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Yes.

LOFTUS. You were awfully handsome.

JUDITH. He used to say so.

LOFTUS. May I take them up to my room and go over them?

JUDITH. Certainly.

LOFTUS. Aunt Kit says you knew a lot about pictures.

JUDITH. My dear Loftus, when you're in love with an artist you suddenly develop an enormous interest in pictures, you become extraordinarily intelligent about them. I liked music — singing — I had a good voice. James Cotter didn't know one tune from another, so that whole summer I never sang a note.

LOFTUS (*pointing to a portrait on the wall*). And who's that?

JUDITH. Your great-grandmother.

LOFTUS. It's bad, but it has got character.

JUDITH. She had something better; sixty thousand pounds.

LOFTUS. Good for her. And this case of medals?

JUDITH. Old de Lury colonels and generals, the eldest de Lury was always a soldier. That one is — oh, what matter? What about Mr. Morgan and his garage?

LOFTUS. Mr. —? Oh yes, of course.

JUDITH. You'd have to go for a week or two on trial; it would take you that time to learn the roads. As well as his sea-fishing he has two or three lakes up in the mountains, some of them thirty or forty miles off.

LOFTUS. That sounds grand. And I could stay here for the couple of weeks, couldn't I, Aunt Judith, and tootle over to the hotel every morning?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

JUDITH. I'd rather you'd stay at the hotel; you'd get more quickly into ——

LOFTUS (*hurrying to the window*). Look, look! Pigeons! White fantails. Oh, the darlings!

JUDITH. There's a big pigeon-cote here. We've had white fantails as long as I can remember.

LOFTUS. They're perfect. . . . Is there a horse I could ride? I have ridden a bit in Dublin, in the Park.

JUDITH. Only your Aunt Kit's mare.

LOFTUS. Too small for me, I suppose. But maybe I could borrow a nag — or hire one.

JUDITH. Josie Burke has a nice horse. I'm sure he'd be delighted to — but we keep getting away from business, Loftus.

LOFTUS (*leaning gracefully against the mantel-piece*). Yes, I keep forgetting. Dumb of me, Aunt Judith, dumb of me. But the place and everything is so marvellous.

(KIT comes in. She stops suddenly, staring at LOFTUS.)

KIT. Lofty!

LOFTUS. No one ever calls me that, Aunt Kit. I'm always full Loftus.

KIT. No — I mean — oh, Judith, don't you see it?

JUDITH. See what?

KIT. Lofty — the living image — long ago — he used to stand just like that.

JUDITH (*grudging*). He is a bit like his father

— why shouldn't he be? I can't say I rejoice in the likeness, as you know I never cared much for Lofty; and as to "standing like that", how else would a man stand in front of a fireplace?

KIT. I suppose so. But — oh, now that you've come at last, you will stay, Loftus, won't you?

LOFTUS. For ever and a day! No, Aunt Judith wants to fire me. She's throwing me into the arms of Mr. Morgan.

KIT. That man again! What's all this about, Judith?

JUDITH. I've an idea that Francis might take on Loftus to help in his garage.

KIT. At the hotel? Judith, you're mad. A de Lury in a hotel garage!

JUDITH. Why not? Loftus hasn't a penny, and he says he knows something about motor-cars. He wants, very sensibly, to turn his knowledge into cash.

KIT. No, no; we'll give him the two hundred pounds he wants —

JUDITH. "We'll?" You mean "I".

KIT. Yes, you — you. You'll give him the money and set him up in Dublin. It will probably become a tremendously successful garage if people know it is being managed by a de Lury — though I still don't think it's quite the thing. But down here, in Ballycarrig, it would never, never do. Think what people would say. The Fitzpatricks and the Blakes and —



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

JUDITH (*ironically*). Yes, wouldn't it be terrible! (*Rising.*) We'll talk it over with Francis when he comes to dinner tonight. You could go over and see his garage and the cars tomorrow morning.

LOFTUS (*submissively*). Very well, Aunt Judith.

(JUDITH *goes out.*)

KIT. Surely you're not thinking seriously of this Morgan idea?

LOFTUS. I don't know. She sprung it on me so suddenly. She won't give me any money.

KIT. Oh, she's mean, mean. I shouldn't say that; I love her. She's good and kind in lots of ways, but she's so tight about money.

LOFTUS. That's why Mother will never speak to her or see her. That's why Mother never let me come down here. She stopped her allowance, didn't she, after grandfather died?

KIT. Yes, it was a shame. She said your mother with her war pension and her own money was quite well off, better off than we were, but Father had kept on allowing her the two hundred a year he always gave poor Lofty. I think it was mean of Judith to stop it.

LOFTUS. Well, I'd welcome anything that would mean being near you and near Killycreggs, Aunt Kit. I've been wandering round all the afternoon, round the house and round the garden when the rain stopped, and talking

## II KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

to the men in the yard. When I told them who I was they — sort of fell for me.

KIT. Why shouldn't they? They're so loyal to the de Lurys.

LOFTUS. Everything's so perfect and beautiful. It — it sort of grips you.

KIT. You feel you've come home?

LOFTUS. I suppose I do — which is all nonsense. For, as Aunt Judith keeps reminding me, I've no right to feel at home here.

KIT. You *have* a right, a moral right. When Lofty was killed three months before you were born, Father left Killycreggs to Judith and never remembered to alter his will and leave it to you. He should have. He loved this place, so did your father. Of course Judith loves it too.

LOFTUS. Who could help loving it? My bedroom's a little dream; all that nice mahogany.

KIT. It's a very small room, only Father's dressing-room. I wanted to put you in the big bedroom off it, but Judith wouldn't let me.

LOFTUS. The room with the big canopy bed? I'd have been lost in it. My little room's perfect. It's got charm.

KIT. The de Lury charm! It used to be quite a phrase long ago. They said no one could resist a de Lury. Your grandfather had it and your father and, as I told you, you've a touch of it yourself.

LOFTUS. I'm too overlaid with Ailesbury

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

Road. . . . What's Mr. Morgan like? I only saw him for a few minutes.

KIT. Oh, just what you saw; a capable, vulgar business man. He — this is quite between ourselves, Loftus—he has the effrontery to want to marry your aunt.

LOFTUS. Marry Aunt Judith! But of course that's quite impossible.

KIT. Quite impossible, naturally. But she teased me this afternoon by saying she hadn't definitely refused him. It upset me for a minute, but then I realised she was only teasing.

LOFTUS. He should be turned from the house.

KIT. My very words, Loftus. "Your father", I said, "would have turned him from the house."

LOFTUS. With a kick in the pants. How can Aunt Judith tolerate it for a minute?

KIT. He's a good customer, she says.

LOFTUS. Oh, money, money, money! Does she think of nothing but money?

(DR. PRATT comes in, a man between fifty and sixty, nice to look at, gentle in manner.)

PRATT. Oh, Kit! Margaret told me that Judith was here.

KIT (*shaking hands*). She went out of the room a couple of minutes ago. This is my nephew Loftus, Dr. Pratt.

LOFTUS (*shaking hands*). How-do-you-do?

PRATT. How are you?

KIT. Shall I fetch Judith, Bob?

PRATT. In a few minutes, Kit, in a few minutes. I'll sit down and smoke a cigarette; maybe she'll come.

*(He sits down and lights a cigarette.)*

LOFTUS *(indicating the cigarette)*. You're a bit of a liar, Aunt Kit.

KIT. Ah, no. Dr. Pratt is a privileged person.

PRATT. Yes, young man. Judith knows I can't do without my cigarette — I think it's my only vice — so she's indulgent. If you're very quick, you can smoke one before she comes back.

*(He holds out his case.)*

LOFTUS *(taking one)*. Thanks awfully.

KIT. Don't let her see you, Loftus.

LOFTUS. You bet I won't.

PRATT. Well, old Malachi Burke is dead——

KIT. Ah, the poor man, at long last. God rest his soul.

PRATT. And Mrs. Foley has hiked herself up and gone for a cure to Harrogate, thank God, and Kitty Roche is out of danger and the measles are abating, and with the help of God and saying it in a whisper, I'm going fishing tomorrow.

KIT. The water should be perfect after the rain last night.

PRATT. It should.

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

LOFTUS. Are you — are you going to fish near here, sir?

PRATT. Yes, on your aunt's bit of water. A very pretty bit it is.

LOFTUS. Could — could I come and watch you?

PRATT. To be sure. Fish yourself?

LOFTUS. No. I never had a rod in my hand. But — but I'm going rabbit-shooting this evening (*as if it was a tremendous adventure*).

PRATT (*playing up*). You are — really? That's tremendous. . . . Town-bred?

LOFTUS. Yes, sir.

PRATT. Amazing in a de Lury, Kit, eh?

KIT. It's not his fault, Bob. He only came today and already he loves the place. Don't you, Loftus?

LOFTUS. It's adorable.

PRATT. Why not come with me tomorrow?

LOFTUS. I asked you if I might.

PRATT. I mean, come and fish. There are rods here, Kit?

KIT. They haven't been used for years.

PRATT. I'll bring one. How about clothes?

LOFTUS. I've this suit, a dinner-jacket and tennis things.

PRATT. I'll bring over an old pair of bags and (*looking at LOFTUS's feet*), yes, you'll get into my boots all right.

LOFTUS. Oh — oh — you really mean it, do you?

PRATT. Of course. Why not?

LOFTUS. I'll be the most awful duffer ——

PRATT. You must begin some time.

LOFTUS (*starting up*). Jee whiz!

(*He is so moved and excited that he goes outside the window and stands with his back to the room.*)

PRATT. A nice boy, Kit, and the image of Lofty.

KIT. Yes, isn't he? Oh, he's charming.

PRATT (*half-cynically*). The old de Lury charm, eh?

KIT. A little of it, I think.

PRATT. What will he make of it, what *will* he make of it? What's he doing — or going to do?

KIT. He hasn't quite made up his mind yet.

PRATT. I see. A real de Lury.

KIT (*a little indignantly*). Father and my brother were both fine soldiers.

PRATT. Yes, but those uncles! A little money is a dangerous thing, Kit. It's well for me I never had a penny except what I earned. If I'd had money, I'd have sat back and never done a stroke — except stroke a river or a lake.

KIT. Nonsense, you've done splendidly. Judith always declares you're the best doctor in the country.

PRATT. Yes, I was clever — long ago.

KIT. You're dining here tonight, did you know?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

PRATT. I met Ellie on the road and she told me.

LOFTUS (*coming back*). Do we fish with a fly?

PRATT. Yes.

LOFTUS. A dry fly? Isn't there something called dry-fly fishing?

PRATT. Yes. But we'll be wet.

LOFTUS. If I could read up about it —

KIT. There's a whole shelf of sporting books in the library.

LOFTUS. I haven't seen the library yet. Where is it?

KIT. Beyond the little room with the telephone.

LOFTUS. I know.

(*JUDITH comes in. She doesn't trouble to shake hands with the doctor.*)

JUDITH. I heard you were here, Bob. Did I keep you?

PRATT. Only a minute or two. I've been talking to Kit and to your nephew here.

JUDITH. You're to dine here tonight — in case you don't know.

PRATT. That's partly why I called. I met Ellie — she seemed to think — she seemed to have said something that would make you think we weren't coming. Of course we'll be delighted.

JUDITH. She didn't like the company I was offering her.

PRATT. This boy?

JUDITH. No. Francis Morgan.

PRATT (*his eyebrows up a little*). Oh, Francey!

JUDITH. Are you shocked too, Bob?

PRATT. Not in the least. But Francey is getting on — dining with the de Lurys.

JUDITH. Why shouldn't he?

PRATT. Why indeed? He's better company than most people I sit down to dinner with.

KIT. I'm old-fashioned enough to think that lines should be drawn somewhere.

PRATT. They're being smudged over, Kit. I doubt if your father would have asked the dispensary doctor to dinner, even if he was a sort of cousin.

KIT. Oh, Bob, I never meant for a minute —

PRATT. I know you didn't, my dear. But my sort has gone up in the world and now it's the Morgan's turn on the social wheel. I watch it; I'm interested and amused. Lady Fitzpatrick had the Grogan girls to tennis last week, so Ellie tells me.

KIT. Impossible!

PRATT. I hear they play a very good game and they're not flirtatious.

KIT. That vulgar old mother! *Her* mother sold fish.

PRATT. I remember; bad, expensive fish. Still, Mrs. Grogan had the good sense to have her girls educated in France and they're damned pretty girls.



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

(MARGARET *puts her head in.*)

MARGARET. If you please, Master Loftus?

LOFTUS. Yes?

MARGARET. You're wanted.

LOFTUS. Who on earth can want me?

JUDITH. Who is it, Margaret?

MARGARET. A certain party, Miss.

LOFTUS. You're sure he — she — it — asked for me?

MARGARET. No mistake about it. The enquiry was for the young master.

LOFTUS. But I'm not — Oh, what matter. Will you excuse me, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Run along. It's probably just a beggar.

(LOFTUS *goes, followed by* MARGARET.)

PRATT. The young master! Is he called that already, Judith?

JUDITH. Oh, it's just servants' nonsense.

KIT. They can't get over having a de Lury — I mean a de Lury man in the house again after all these years.

PRATT. And *is* he going to be the young master?

JUDITH. Certainly not.

PRATT. He seems to fit the picture.

JUDITH. It's one I've no fancy for.

PRATT. . . . I wonder. . . . I have to be going on in a few minutes. Could I have a word with you, Judith, if Kit will excuse us?

JUDITH. Kit, dear, give us just a few minutes.

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KIT. Of course. I'll go after Loftus. I want to know who the "certain party" is.

*(She goes out.)*

PRATT. She's fallen for him too.

JUDITH. She's known him since he was a baby and has always liked him. I never met him before today.

PRATT. A pretty, engaging boy. . . . Well, Judith?

JUDITH. "Well" is the word, Bob. Literally not a vestige of pain for three weeks.

PRATT. You're a wonder.

JUDITH. *You're* the wonder.

PRATT. You had the courage to go through with it. It's nearly ten months, isn't it?

JUDITH. Just a year.

PRATT. By George! *All* the little troubles cleared up?

JUDITH. Every blessed one of them. I never felt better in my life.

PRATT. That's grand.

JUDITH. Any more injections?

PRATT. I don't think so, not unless the pain starts again.

JUDITH. It won't.

PRATT. Please God.

JUDITH. I only want one thing more from you.

PRATT. You shall have it. Anything you want.

JUDITH. Your bill.

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT      ACT

PRATT. Oh!

JUDITH. When I've paid it I'll feel I'm finished with the whole horrid thing.

PRATT. Couldn't we just call it quits, Judith?

JUDITH. No.

PRATT. I've been making a lot of money lately — a couple of paying chronics and no less than two sprained ankles at the Fitzpatricks.

JUDITH. Sprained ankles can't be worth much. Come, make out your bill this afternoon and bring it to me when you come to dinner.

PRATT. Look, I'll bargain with you. I'll charge you for the injections because that vaccine was damned expensive; all the rest goes against the salmon-fishing.

JUDITH. That has nothing to do with it.

PRATT. Why, you give it to me free year after year.

JUDITH. It's your only little pleasure, but nobody must know. Ellie doesn't know, does she?

PRATT. No. She thinks I'm very extravagant — especially when I don't bring her a couple of fish every week.

JUDITH. I'd like to have paid you; you must have saved me a hundred pounds.

PRATT. More than that, probably. A big operation, a nursing-home, away somewhere for convalescence — you wouldn't have got out of it for a hundred — not nearly.

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JUDITH. You see!

PRATT. But I'm so proud, Judith, to have done it like this. I've not lost my cunning, not by a long shot.

JUDITH. Of course you haven't. Oh, if only you weren't buried here!

PRATT. I've sunk in, my dear, so happily sunk in.

JUDITH. You were brilliant at Trinity.

PRATT. Yes, and then locum to old Merrivale here, and when he drank himself to death I stepped into his shoes and I've filled them ever since, and I'm so happy except that they work me too hard and I don't get enough time for fishing; but Ellie keeps the purse and gives me enough pocket-money and — and — there's nothing to grumble at.

JUDITH. I get so impatient with you.

PRATT. I'm too old to change.

JUDITH. I've been scolding you for years.

PRATT. Indeed you have. But don't forget, I'm a de Lury, your own third cousin. It's in the blood.

JUDITH. Hopeless, feckless blood.

PRATT. Excellent, healthy blood. We never drink, we don't go mad. Look at the recovery you've made. There, don't work yourself into a fret over me, Judith. Give me your hand; let me fish your river again next season and forget that you owe me anything.

JUDITH. The vaccines.

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PRATT. Very well, the vaccines. Word of honour? *(They shake hands.)* Am I to dress tonight?

JUDITH. No, no. It's only ourselves and Francis. I'm sure he hasn't a dress-suit.

PRATT. He has one of the smartest I ever saw. He was wearing it at the tennis-club dance the other night. Mine is the one I bought when I got my degree. Ellie says it's a disgrace, but she won't give me the price of a new one.

JUDITH. Ellie is ——

PRATT. A very good wife to me, Judith.

JUDITH. There are saints going round still, Bob, and ——

PRATT. Yes, aren't there?

JUDITH. I wish you'd let me finish what I was going to say.

*(Through the French window appear MISS FITZPATRICK and her younger sister MOYA. MISS FITZPATRICK is about twenty-two or twenty-three. Pretty, very well dressed in suitable country clothes. MOYA, eighteen, equally prettily dressed, has an almost vacant face and is practically inarticulate.)*

MISS FITZ. We burst up through the garden, Miss de Lury, to save Margaret's old legs. . . . Good-afternoon, Dr. Pratt. *(To JUDITH)* It will surprise you to hear that I've a note from Mother. *(She hands her a letter.)* I always say

Mother's like a Great Power. Don't they keep writing notes to each other? Moya and I spend half our lives scouring the country delivering Mother's notes. *I* say — what are post-offices for? But this one *is* important; I know what's in it.

PRATT. How are my patients getting on, Miss Fitzpatrick?

MISS FITZ. Oh, I suppose all right. But what is the use of asking two men to stay specially to play tennis when in less than no time they go and sprain their ankles? Putrid.

PRATT. They won't be able to play for weeks — probably not again this summer.

MISS FITZ. I know. And they won't even go. They just limp round, look pathetic and smoke all the cigarettes in the house. Apart from their tennis they're so crashingly dull. There should be a Selfridge or some such place round here. Someone you could ring up and order a man from.

JUDITH (*having read her note*). I'm afraid I'm hopeless, Miss Fitzpatrick, quite helpless in this emergency.

MISS FITZ. I told Mother you would be. I told her, "Miss de Lury can do almost anything, but even she can't produce a man — I mean a decent tennis-player — out of a hat, like a rabbit".

JUDITH. No, I'm afraid I can't.

(LOFTUS *comes in, eager and excited.*)

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

LOFTUS. Aunt Judith!

JUDITH. Loftus! Miss Fitzpatrick and Miss Moya Fitzpatrick, my nephew, Mr. de Lury.

MISS FITZ. How-do-you-do?

(LOFTUS bows to them. MOYA gives a vacant smile.)

MISS FITZ (to JUDITH). But you have!

JUDITH. Have what?

MISS FITZ. Produced a man. (To LOFTUS) You play tennis?

LOFTUS. Of course.

MISS FITZ. Any good?

LOFTUS. Well, in the finals last time at Carrickmines and won at ———

MISS FITZ. That's good enough for Ballycarrig. Look here, there's an American tournament day after tomorrow for the local lunatic asylum or something; my partner's gone down with a sprained ankle. Will you?

LOFTUS. Why — I — I ———

MISS FITZ. I'm not bad. We won't get the booby prize.

JUDITH. You'll be at Mr. Morgan's, Loftus.

MISS FITZ. Francey Morgan's hotel? Grand, almost next door to the tournament. Come over to our place and practice tomorrow.

LOFTUS. I'm going fishing tomorrow with Dr. Pratt.

MISS FITZ. Damn. How long will you keep him, Doctor Pratt?

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PRATT. I'm starting early. He'll be bored with it by lunch-time.

MISS FITZ. Good. Come across in the afternoon, we can play till seven these long evenings. Moya's got a partner; that awful O'Flynn out of the National Bank. You can stay on for dinner and a spot of bridge; we're short one. That awful Captain Swain just lies on a sofa all day, limps down to meals, eats masses and can't even play bridge. Must fly, Miss de Lury. Thanks a million. Another note to leave — only about cakes. You're a gift from the gods, Mr. de Lury. See you tomorrow. Come on, Moya; hustle. Bye-bye.

*(And they are gone.)*

LOFTUS. But — but who are they, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. The Fitzpatricks. They come down every summer. Lady Fitzpatrick has a big place near here. Of course you can't go.

LOFTUS. I suppose not. But it's awful to be let down just on the eve of a tournament.

JUDITH. You can explain tomorrow, or write a letter.

LOFTUS. Yes, of course I can. But what I came about was — oh, I know it's none of my business and don't keep on reminding me I'm not "the young master", I know I'm not, but that poor man — Sylvester, that's his name —

JUDITH. Oh, Sylvester was "the certain party". I might have guessed it.



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

LOFTUS. It's dreadful, he's so weak and crying. I gave him all the loose change I had — only five shillings — to try to cheer him up; he showered blessings on me, but five shillings can't help much.

JUDITH. And I found out that the pound I gave Kit this morning for the house went to him too. Twenty-five shillings in one day — he's not done so badly.

LOFTUS. It's not the money, really. It's — if only you'd take him back.

JUDITH. No. I've made up my mind. He's past his work.

PRATT. The old gardener?

JUDITH. Yes.

LOFTUS. Please, please, Aunt Judith.

JUDITH. No, Loftus.

LOFTUS. My first day here. If I asked it as a special favour?

JUDITH. No. It's nice of you to be so feeling, but you don't understand the circumstances.

LOFTUS. . . . Oh, I'd like everyone to be happy here. We — the de Lurys — we shouldn't let our people down, not just because they're old and past their work.

PRATT. Your aunt would never be unjust.

LOFTUS. I'm sure not. So —

*(An appealing look at JUDITH.)*

JUDITH. No. I'm being just to myself and the place.

LOFTUS. He loves us all so much; he's been

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here so long and his father before him.

JUDITH. Bob, put Sylvester into your car and run him home; he's been in the house ever since I gave him his dismissal, and I can't bear it any longer. I'm giving him a pension; he's not being treated badly.

PRATT. I'm sure of that. Yes, I'll deposit him with his wife.

(MARGARET comes in, a small parcel in her hand. She goes to LOFTUS.)

MARGARET. For you, sir, from Mrs. Clancy.

LOFTUS (taking it). For me?

MARGARET. Yes, sir. With the compliments of the season and bidding you welcome and hoping you'll be spared long.

(She goes out.)

LOFTUS. What on earth —? (He opens the parcel. It contains a fine pair of homespun stockings.) Gee! Look, Aunt Judith! Are these really for me? Why? Who's Mrs. Clancy?

JUDITH. The woman at the gate-lodge.

PRATT. She knits the best stockings in the country. I always get mine from her.

LOFTUS. But — have I to buy them? How much are they?

PRATT. Not at all; it's a gift. Her homage to "the young master".

(With a look at JUDITH.)

LOFTUS. Oh, how lovely of her! Is she there still, I wonder? Could I run out and thank her?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

PRATT. She'd appreciate much more a little visit from you this evening. Wouldn't she, Judith?

(JUDITH *turns away impatiently.*)

LOFTUS. Of course I'll go. How darling of her! But everyone here seems so nice, aren't they, Dr. Pratt? You taking me fishing and Jer taking me out after rabbits — and Margaret — and the cook asking me what pudding I liked, and even the kitchen-maid. . . . Aunt Kit talked of the de Lury charm, but if we've got it it seems to me they have it too.

JUDITH (*harshly*). Oh, stop talking of the de Lury charm; I'm sick of it.

LOFTUS. Aunt Judith!

JUDITH. Yes, dead sick of it. I've been hearing of it all my life.

PRATT. You can't escape it, Judith, my dear.

JUDITH. I can and will. I've none of it myself, thank God. (PRATT *laughs.*) You needn't laugh, Bob; you're a de Lury yourself and it's ruined you.

PRATT. I'm very contented.

JUDITH. Of course, that's the curse of it. Contentment, charm. It boils down to utter selfishness. Loftus is staring at me as if I was mad. I'm not mad. Do you know what I've been doing since lunch? Paying housekeeping bills.

PRATT. A very worthy occupation.

JUDITH. Yes, but it's Kit's job. I give her

## II KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

an allowance for the housekeeping, but does she ever keep inside it? Of course not. It dribbles here and there; gifts to this person and that — “the poor man, I couldn’t deny him” — “poor old Sylvester Brannigan”, and bang goes a pound, and Miss Kit has blessings showered on her head. Apart from the accepted tradition that the eldest de Lury goes into the army we do nothing — nothing. Think of my two uncles, Bob; sat here all their lives doing nothing. Father lived above his income, so did Lofty. If grandfather hadn’t married an heiress, where would we be today? Sometimes I wish we never had had grandmother’s money and then Killycreggs would have gone bankrupt before I was born.

LOFTUS. Oh! But surely you love Killycreggs, Aunt Judith?

JUDITH. Love it enough to work my fingers to the bone to keep it going. Kit must have her pretty dresses and her hunter and little trips to Dublin and England, and money in her pocket to be the generous grand lady. I haven’t been out of this place for twelve years. (*Ironically*) Of course I love Killycreggs so much I never want to stir, and of course I love making every penny I can out of the garden and the farm, and bargaining with Francis Morgan and dismissing an old gardener, and getting the reputation of being the cross Miss de Lury, the stingy Miss de Lury. Oh, it’s a lovely life!

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

PRATT. You've made a fine thing of it, Judith.

JUDITH. Nonsense. Oh, if I'd been a man! Or even been educated. But it was the accepted thing that the de Lury females never got any education. Think of Aunt Katherine and Aunt Judy withering in Folkestone. Aunt Katherine could have painted; Aunt Judy — Aunt Judy might have done almost anything — but just governesses, strings of incompetent governesses. I could have sung — a few lessons from the organist at Ballintubber was all I was allowed, and *he* was third-rate. Thank your stars, Loftus, you're not "the young master".

LOFTUS. I want to work, Aunt Judith. I do want to be independent.

JUDITH. You'll get a beginning with Francis Morgan; it's only a beginning; you're not going to stick there for ever.

LOFTUS (*not enthusiastic*). Yes.

JUDITH. You could go over to the hotel first thing in the morning — or even go back with him tonight.

LOFTUS. Oh, I can't manage tomorrow.

JUDITH. Why not?

LOFTUS. You heard Dr. Pratt asking me to go fishing with him tomorrow. And there's tennis at the Fitzpatrick's in the afternoon.

JUDITH. Oh!

LOFTUS. Please, Aunt Judith, give me one

## II KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

day here. I don't care about the tennis, but I've never fished in my life.

JUDITH. I see. Very well. What sort of cars has Francis, Bob?

PRATT. A couple of Fords, an Austin, I think, and I forget what else.

JUDITH. Do you understand those cars, Loftus?

LOFTUS. What do you take me for? Though I may be a little green on the "what else" . . . . Do you fish for trout too, sir?

PRATT. Yes. But don't "sir" me. We're relations. I'm your aunt's third cousin. What am I to Loftus, Judith? Fourth cousin, or third once-removed?

JUDITH. I don't know. Unfortunately, a de Lury.

*(She turns back to her desk and starts to work.)*

LOFTUS. Could I wear these stockings tomorrow, Bob?

PRATT. The very thing, Loftus.

LOFTUS. I should have brought my riding-breeches. I could wire for them. Lucky I put in my tennis togs.

PRATT. There's lots of tennis.

LOFTUS. Good! Bathing?

PRATT. Fifteen miles away.

LOFTUS. Nothing when I've a car. I love swimming, but I didn't bring a suit. Can I buy one near here?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT II

PRATT. Francey Morgan's shop is full of them.

LOFTUS. I keep on forgetting Morgan.

PRATT. I'm off, Judith. I'll see you tonight.

JUDITH. I'm looking forward to it. About half-past seven.

PRATT. Till then. (*To LOFTUS*) Try not to pot Jer tonight. Concentrate on the bunnies.

LOFTUS. I'll be careful, Bob.

(*PRATT goes out.*)

LOFTUS (*after a moment*). Do we shoot with a rifle or a shot-gun, Aunt Judith? (*She doesn't answer.*) Do we shoot rabbits with a rifle? (*She looks at him, shrugs her shoulders and turns back to her work.*) Oh, I'll have another word with Jer before tea. . . . I wish it was the season for hunting. . . . It will be too early for cubbing, won't it? . . . (*There is no answer from JUDITH.*) Jer will know, I expect. . . .

(*And he goes out.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

*The same scene, two weeks later. It is about seven o'clock in the evening. The room is empty, it is rather dark outside, raining hard. MARGARET comes in carrying a small tray with seven sherry glasses and a decanter of sherry on it. She puts the tray down and is shaking up the cushions when LOFTUS comes in. He is looking very nice in a dinner-jacket; he is more sunburned than when we saw him last.*

LOFTUS (*seeing the sherry*). I say, are we assembling here, not in the drawing-room?

MARGARET. I'm not sure, sir. I'm to show Dr. Pratt in here to speak to the mistress and Mrs. Pratt's to be housed in the drawing-room, and whether the sherry is to go there or here beats me. The Pratts are coming early because of the doctor talking to the mistress.

LOFTUS. It's going to be quite a dinner-party.

MARGARET. Yes, sir. With that Francey Morgan and Sir —— his name has slipped me.

LOFTUS. Sir James and Lady Cotter.

MARGARET. That's it, sir. He's not from this part of the country, is he?

LOFTUS. No. English.



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

MARGARET. The creature.

LOFTUS. But very nice. Fishing at Morgan's hotel.

(JUDITH comes in. She looks rather splendid in a dark dress with some fine old jewels.)

MARGARET. I put the sherry in here, miss. Is that right?

JUDITH. Probably. See that there is a good fire in the drawing-room, it's chilly this evening. I see the doctor's car coming up the avenue. Don't forget to show him in here and Mrs. Pratt to the drawing-room.

MARGARET. Yes, miss.

(She goes out.)

JUDITH. I wonder would you entertain Mrs. Pratt, Loftus, for a quarter of an hour. I want to speak to the doctor here.

LOFTUS. Of course. I say — may I say? — you do look stunning.

JUDITH (*fingering her dress*). As old as the hills.

LOFTUS. That necklace!

JUDITH. Older. (*She seems nervous, moves about the room a little nervously. There is a distant bell.*) There they are. Do go, like a good boy.

LOFTUS. Right. I can't help liking Mother Pratt. I like her airs, only I keep being afraid I'll giggle.

JUDITH. I know. She's so—oh, I don't know the word, but she is.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

LOFTUS. "Chauming" is the word. Am I to keep her in the drawing-room till dinner-time?

JUDITH. I don't know, Loftus, I don't know. But keep her there till I send for you or till we join you.

LOFTUS. Right-oh.

*(He goes. A moment's pause. JUDITH is still aimless and nervous. DR. PRATT comes in unannounced. He is in old-fashioned tails.)*

PRATT. Evening, Judith. Why this sequestration? Ellie deflected to the drawing-room and I closeted with you.

JUDITH. I want to speak to you for a few minutes, Bob, and I want to get it over before the others come in. I'm as nervous as a cat.

PRATT. I don't believe it. Never in my life have I seen you nervous.

JUDITH. I am. I've been screwing up my courage all day, but I can't screw it tight enough.

PRATT. What's the trouble?

JUDITH. Kit.

PRATT. Kit? Our gentle Katherine? What's she been up to?

JUDITH. It's what I've been up to, and I daren't tell her.

PRATT. Oh . . . I think I can guess. Francey Morgan is coming to dinner. You're going to marry him.

JUDITH. How did you guess?

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

PRATT. He asked me months ago — “dare I presume”, that was his phrase. I said “of course”. I knew you liked him; the worst you could say would be “no”.

JUDITH. This morning I said “yes”. You’re not vexed with me?

PRATT. No.

JUDITH. And you a de Lury!

PRATT. Only a third cousin, Judith, only a third cousin. I’d like you to be happy. I can’t deny I’d rather you’d chosen someone nearer your own class, but Francey’s as decent as the day and — I want you to be happy; you haven’t had much happiness, Judith.

JUDITH. Thank you, Bob. But there’s worse to come.

PRATT. Nothing could be worse for Kit.

JUDITH. Oh yes. . . . I’m selling Killycreggs.

PRATT. Selling . . . ? Good God, this *is* a facer.

JUDITH. Selling it to Francis.

PRATT. I see. Your dot?

JUDITH. Not exactly. We haven’t bargained, but I couldn’t go to him with empty hands, though I think he’d have taken me without a penny.

PRATT. Why shouldn’t he? The Morgans marrying into the de Lurys!

JUDITH. It’s nothing to do with that. It’s Loftus.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

PRATT. What has he got to do with Killycreggs?

JUDITH. Exactly. I said it to him myself, I said it to Loftus, I "went and shouted in his ear" from the day he came, two weeks ago. It was no use. He's *not* the heir; I own everything. Of course it goes to Kit when I die; I'm older. I'm not strong, as you know; I won't live very many years. Kit will leave it to Loftus, so he is the heir to all intents and purposes and — and —

PRATT. Doesn't he fit the picture?

JUDITH. Like a glove. That's the worst of it, Bob; he's a de Lury to the backbone.

PRATT. He's a charming boy.

JUDITH. To the backbone, I said, but he *has* no backbone. He has the terrible, spineless de Lury charm and this infinite capacity for falling into the de Lury life. The first day he comes he goes rabbit-shooting; he's never had a gun in his hands before, but seemingly he can't miss, he has the de Lury knack of killing things. All we were ever good for was for that — killing natives in India or Africa and birds and beasts in Ireland. Then you take him salmon-fishing —

PRATT. And the young divil hooks a twenty-pounder with his third cast. Of course I had to teach him to play the fish, but I must admit he didn't seem to need much teaching; it came to him instinctive.

## KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT    ACT

JUDITH. Next day he plays tennis with Janey Fitzpatrick — they win the tournament hands down. I insist on him going to Morgan's the day after; he takes out a car, he takes Jimmy — I mean Sir James and Lady Cotter — fishing to Lough Gurrum. They discover their chauffeur isn't just a chauffeur; they insist on him going in the boat with them. He kills a few trout; he's so charming they have him to dine with them; he plays bridge after dinner and gets back here at one in the morning. Next day there's more tennis at the Fitzpatricks'. The next day — oh, I needn't go into it all, but Morgan's garage has faded more and more into the background.

PRATT. I see. Yes, right enough, he's a de Lury.

JUDITH. All the men on the place adore him, Margaret worships the ground he walks on. If he stays here he's going to be lost — lost for all the fine practical things he could do, so I'm going to save him by cutting the ground from under his feet. I'm selling Killycreggs; that's what I've got to tell Kit this evening, that, and my marrying Francis.

PRATT. It's going to be damned hard on Kit.

JUDITH. Of course it is. I've been trying to nerve myself all day and I can't. I promised Francis I'd make the announcement tonight. You must help me, Bob.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

PRATT. Of course, anything I can do —

JUDITH. She won't have to move from here; Francis is going to turn Killycreggs into an hotel, an appendage to his own in Ballycarrig. His is on a rock over the sea; the wives and daughters of the fishers get bored, they want tennis and croquet, gardens to walk in. They can have them here, we're only fifteen miles away. Kit can stay on in her own rooms with her own income. She can trail round, the lovely incompetent hostess. Of course we must have a first-rate housekeeper — Francis and I have it all planned out — but the guests will love having one of the old stock about the place, one of the "rale gentry". We'll become very popular. But no Loftus, not even at Ballycarrig; I'll give him the two hundred pounds he wants and bundle him back to Dublin.

PRATT. It's a daring, dashing plan. Only you, Judith, could have courage for it.

JUDITH. I'm being selfish, Bob; I want to marry Francis, I want to be rid of Killycreggs for ever, it's meant nothing to me but grinding work. Killycreggs! I hate the word.

PRATT. But what a fascination Killycreggs has for others, for generations of the de Lurys and for the people on the place. I've a favour to ask from you, Judith. You'll grant it, I know, on this day of all others.

JUDITH. Hard to deny you anything in reason, Bob.

## KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT    ACT

PRATT. I was with old Sylvester Brannigan this afternoon. He's dying.

JUDITH. Dying? Nonsense. I heard he had taken to his bed with a chill. I sent him soup and a bottle of port.

PRATT. He's dying of a — it seems so sentimental to say it — but he's dying of a broken heart. (*JUDITH stares at him.*) Because he's out of Killycreggs where his father and the generations before him lived and worked and died.

JUDITH. That's all imagination.

PRATT. Of course it is, but he'll die all the same. You don't want to have his death on your conscience. Take him back, Judith. I warrant you you'll have him on your hands only for a year or two.

JUDITH. Parting from him fretted me. Do you think I enjoyed dismissing an old servant?

PRATT. Of course you didn't. Restore him, and stipulate with Francey that he must be kept on.

JUDITH. Yes, I will. Thank God it will be Francey's job in future to do these hateful things. Thank you for telling me, Bob. Oh, I hate being hard, but I had to be for the sake of the place.

PRATT. I know. Make your mind at rest about Sylvester. I'll slip up after dinner and tell him the good news, and I wager he'll be working in the garden tomorrow.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

JUDITH. Not if it rains like this. I won't allow it. . . . Draw the curtains, Bob, it's too dreary. I hate these long summer twilights.

PRATT (*dealing with the thin curtains while JUDITH switches on a flood of light*). Twilight over Killycreggs!

JUDITH. Yes, it is twilight — “and after that the dark”. Only there's no evening star. . . . Thank goodness the engine is working again. It broke down last night; we went to bed with candles. I thought I'd have to send this morning to Galway, but Loftus in an hour got it working like a lamb.

PRATT. He *has* mechanical talent?

JUDITH. Without a doubt. Francis says he handles a car like a mother suckling her child. That's why I want to save him from Killycreggs, that's why —

*(She breaks off, for KIT comes in, in a lovely trailing dress. She looks adorable.)*

KIT. Why did you ask me to come here, Judith? Oh, good-evening, Bob. Where's Ellie?

JUDITH. In the drawing-room. Loftus is taking care of her. . . . Please, Bob.

*(She gives him an appealing look and sits apart.)*

PRATT. Judith has some very important things to say to you, Kit, and she's asked me to — to break — to say them to you before the others come.



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KIT. What is it? Has something dreadful happened, Judith?

PRATT. First, Kit, Judith has had a pretty hard life; she hadn't much girlhood —

KIT. That affair about James Cotter? Father did what he thought right; as things turned out he may have been mistaken.

PRATT. That was only a bit of the hardness of Judith's life.

KIT. I think it was wonderful of her asking him and his wife to dinner tonight, and I don't know that it was very good taste in him to accept.

PRATT. I don't believe Judith has gone on all these years nursing a broken heart.

JUDITH. Forgotten long ago, Kit.

PRATT. But then your brother was killed and your father died, and you and Killycreggs were left on her shoulders.

KIT. I've helped. I've done the house-keeping.

PRATT. She's given you the money to do it. You've not been — forgive me for saying it — very economical.

KIT. Haven't I, Judith? Have I been a spendthrift?

JUDITH. You've — these things don't matter, Bob.

PRATT. They do. They're part of the picture. I want Kit to realise that the whole burden of the place — of Killycreggs — has

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

fallen on you. She's denied herself many things, Kit, clothes —

KIT. She never cared about dressing up.

PRATT. Are you sure? She never went away —

KIT. She loved Killycreggs so much.

PRATT. She has been very ill, but she wouldn't go away and have the expensive operation she should have had.

KIT. Ill? Judith, darling, have you? Why didn't you tell me?

*(She goes to her impulsively.)*

JUDITH. That's all over now, dear.

PRATT. Yes, thank God, well over. But she's tired of Killycreggs.

KIT. Tired of Killycreggs? How could she be? That's impossible.

PRATT. She is. And she's giving it up. She's selling it.

KIT *(dumbfounded for an instant)*. Selling it? . . . Oh, but that's not true. We're not bankrupt, Judith, are we?

JUDITH. No.

KIT. Then — then —

PRATT. She's selling it to Francey Morgan.

KIT. That man!

PRATT. Yes. And she's going to marry him.

*(KIT can't speak; she turns away, her face in her hands.)*

PRATT. My dear, don't take it so badly.

KIT *(in a muffled voice)*. It can't be true.

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PRATT. It is. But you won't have to leave the house; it's your home for as long as ——

KIT (*wildly*). It can't be true, Judith, it can't.

JUDITH (*her head bent, ashamed to look at her*). It is.

KIT. That dreadful man! You — a de Lury — and to give up Killycreggs! You're mad, you're ill — Bob has just said you are! You're dreaming, you're not yourself ——

PRATT. She's tired of it, I tell you, after twenty years. She wants happiness and freedom.

KIT. Happiness with Killycreggs gone! Freedom with that — that Morgan!

PRATT. It's hard on you, Kit, dreadfully hard. But you'll face it because you love Judith.

KIT. Of course I love Judith. I needn't say that, need I, Judith? (*JUDITH shakes her head with a little smile.*) You know it without my saying it. Can't we stay on as we are? You could go away for a long lovely holiday. I tipped Dinny Roche when he brought me a salmon today — I needn't have. Maybe I am stupid and extravagant about the housekeeping; I'll try to be better. I'll cancel the order for the new tennis-racket I was getting at Elvery's — oh, how silly all these things sound — but — but I'm trying to say anything that will stop this madness.

JUDITH. Kit, darling ——

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

KIT. Father — the uncles — grandfather — you can remember them, Judith — stretching back hundreds of years, and now, Loftus —

PRATT. He's not the heir. Judith can do as she likes with the place.

KIT. I know he's not the heir legally, but he is in every other way — the last of the de Lurys.

PRATT. Yes, and Judith wants him to be the last and free of Killycreggs, free to make a different life for himself.

KIT. I didn't mean last in that way. Why should he be the last? Why shouldn't he be a new beginning?

JUDITH (*getting up, and now she is strong*). Yes, why shouldn't he? That's what I want, a new de Lury. There's no room in Ireland now for places like Killycreggs, for de Lurys and their like lounging and fishing and shooting. I wish we'd been burned out in the Troubles; I wish all our sort had been burned out. I wouldn't have behaved like that fool-girl in the play, *The Big House*. I would never have rebuilt Killycreggs, I'd have thanked God to be quit of it. I'm not doing this thing — which seems to you so monstrous, Kit—just for my own sake, for my own happiness, I'm doing it for his, for Loftus's sake too. You don't understand, but Bob does, and he's a de Lury himself. Help me, Kit; don't be cruel. My mind's made up, there's no shaking me. I'm giving

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up Killycreggs, I'm marrying Francis Morgan; he's coming to dinner tonight and I'm going to make what's called "a formal announcement". You mustn't let me down. You won't — because you love me.

KIT. I won't, I couldn't! Darling, I love you so much! Oh, if we'd only let you marry Jimmy Cotter!

JUDITH. Yes, if you only had! But where's the use of talking of it? All my tastes are wrong; first a penniless painter, then a rich shop-keeper —

KIT (*the thought just strikes her, she brings it out with triumph*). But — he's a Roman Catholic!

JUDITH. Yes.

KIT. Then you can't. That settles it.

JUDITH. No.

KIT. They've always said he's a very good Catholic. He wouldn't hear of a registry office or one of those things they do at Holyhead.

JUDITH. I wouldn't ask him to do either.

KIT. Then —

JUDITH. I wanted to keep this from you tonight, I hoped you wouldn't think of it. I'm going to become a Roman Catholic.

KIT (*utter horror in her voice*). You're — "turning"?

PRATT. Judith!

KIT. You're — turning!

JUDITH. Darling, I think I'll go on saying

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

my two or three old Protestant prayers night and morning and read the Bible Father gave me the day I was confirmed, and I don't think Father Brophy will mind — much, and I don't think God will mind at all.

KIT. You'll go to Confession?

JUDITH. Very good for me.

KIT. And believe in Saints and the Infallibility of the Pope?

JUDITH. I've always believed in Saints.

KIT. And prayers for the dead?

JUDITH. Whenever I hear anyone is dead I say "God rest his soul", so do you. Isn't that a prayer for the dead?

MARGARET (*announcing*). Sir James Cotter and Mr. Morgan.

(MORGAN *looks splendid in tails and a white waistcoat. SIR JAMES is in very nice tweeds. He is fifty or a little more, very distinguished-looking, perhaps a beard. Some beautiful coloured tie which perfectly goes with his suit steps him out of the ordinary.*)

MORGAN. We're not late, are we, Judith? Here's Sir James Cotter; he says he knew you years ago, so I suppose I need do no introducing.

JUDITH (*shaking hands*). No, indeed. How-do-you-do?

SIR JAMES. How are you, Judith?

JUDITH. Thanks for the "Judith". I was

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wondering how I could get my tongue round to call you "Sir James".

SIR JAMES. I wanted to call you "Judy", but I was afraid.

JUDITH. No one ever called me that except you — Jimmy. There's Kit.

KIT (*with grandeur*). How-do-you-do, Sir James?

SIR JAMES (*amused*). How - do - you - do, Katherine?

JUDITH (*to MARGARET who has lingered*). Ask Mrs. Pratt and Master Loftus to come here, and serve dinner in ten minutes.

MARGARET. Yes, miss.

(*She goes.*)

SIR JAMES. I must apologise for my wife. She went sea-fishing this afternoon and the result —! (*To DR. PRATT*) I nearly had to send for you.

PRATT. I'm so sorry. Is she ——?

SIR JAMES. All over — gone, in every sense of the word, but food is the last thing she can face. Some other time, Judy, if you'll ask us again.

JUDITH. I'm so sorry, especially as tonight is a sort of special occasion.

SIR JAMES. And I'm not dressed. I didn't bring even a dinner-jacket to Connemara. Things have changed in twenty years.

PRATT. I must smoke. (*To SIR JAMES*) A cigarette?

SIR JAMES. Thanks, doctor. (*MORGAN and*

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

KIT and PRATT move a little apart, the men busy themselves with cigarettes.)

JUDITH. It's splendid to see you again, Jimmy, and to know you're so successful — and happy?

SIR JAMES. Awfully happy. I married an Irish girl after all, Judy.

JUDITH. Good!

SIR JAMES. Only two years after. Terrible, isn't it?

JUDITH. And I forgot you in a year, Jimmy. Awful!

*(They both laugh at themselves.)*

SIR JAMES. And here we are. And you're as handsome as you were twenty years ago — handsomer. If I wasn't on a holiday — oh, hang it all, I know Lizzie packed my paint-box. May I paint you?

JUDITH. Honoured, Sir James.

SIR JAMES. Shut up. I ran away to Ireland to escape the "sir"-ing nonsense.

JUDITH *(a little dig at him)*. The eternal fly-boy!

MORGAN. Is he offering to do your picture, Judith?

JUDITH. He is, Francis.

MORGAN. For nothing?

JUDITH. I'm certainly not going to pay him a penny.

MORGAN. Then clinch with it, Judith, clinch with it.



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JUDITH. I'm clinching, Francis.

KIT. Are you having good sport, Sir James?

SIR JAMES. Too bright until today — thank God for this rain. . . . I'm liking that nephew of yours immensely; he's been taking me about and he seems to know quite a lot about pictures.

KIT. He's the dearest boy.

*(The dearest boy and MRS. PRATT come in. She is very smart, the dress just a little wrong.)*

JUDITH *(shaking hands)*. I'm so sorry, Mrs. Pratt, to have left you in the drawing-room, but I hope Loftus looked after you properly.

MRS. PRATT. Indeed he did, Miss de Lury. We had a most chauming conversazione.

JUDITH. Mrs. Pratt — Sir James Cotter.

MRS. PRATT. Chaumed to meet you.

SIR JAMES. How-do-you-do?

JUDITH *(at the sherry)*. Will you pass these round, Loftus? I'm sorry, Jimmy, I'm so out of the world I only read about cocktails in novels. I don't know how to make them. This is only sherry, but Father laid down a lot and there's some of it still left, and it's supposed to be good.

MRS. PRATT *(taking hers from LOFTUS)*. Thanks so awfully much, Mr. Loftus.

LOFTUS. Aunt Kit?

KIT *(taking hers)*. Thanks.

MRS. PRATT. It's been chauming weather, hasn't it, Sir James?

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

SIR JAMES. A bit bright for me.

MORGAN. Too damned bright. Three of 'em left today — just before the rain started.

MRS. PRATT. Three what?

MORGAN. Guests. And all singles, worse luck.

MRS. PRATT. Aw! (*turning her back on him, to SIR JAMES*). I hoped her Ladyship would have been here.

SIR JAMES. Her —? Oh, Lizzie! No, she's in bed with a stomachache.

MRS. PRATT. Aw!

SIR JAMES (*taking his sherry*). Thanks, Loftus.

KIT. But we hope, some other time —

MORGAN (*taking his*). That's the boy!

SIR JAMES (*sipping his sherry*). Amontillado, Judith! The driest, most delicious! I ran away from Donegal to Spain that time, do you remember?

JUDITH (*her glass in her hand*). Always the fly-boy! Help yourself, Loftus. (*He does so. She is in the middle of the room; she is dead nervous.*) Mrs. Pratt — everyone — this is a little celebration. I want to say, for I know Mr. Morgan — Francis — can't say it, he's more nervous than I am — and why should either of us be? — but we're going to be married.

(MRS. PRATT *chokes, but gets her glass on the mantelpiece or on a table without*

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*spilling it. LOFTUS stares. SIR JAMES is the first to recover himself.)*

SIR JAMES. I'm so glad, Judy, my dear. Mr. Morgan — I've only known him a couple of weeks, but we call each other Francey and Jimmy and he's — he's sterling, Judy, and Francey, she's — she's —

MORGAN (*as he stands humbly with his head bent*). You needn't say it; I know. Miles above me.

JUDITH (*going to him*). Not an inch, my dear. (*They are together, KIT and LOFTUS together, the PRATTS together.*)

MRS. PRATT (*almost inarticulate*). Bob!

PRATT (*in a low, soothing voice*). All right. I know. Say something nice.

MRS. PRATT (*pulling herself together*). I — I will. (*She advances towards MORGAN with a fixed smile, but her indignation gets the better of her.*) Well, Francey, the idea!

MORGAN. You yourself married into the de Lurys', ma'am, from a shebeen in Ballinasloe.

MRS. PRATT. From Lord Clancarty's estate.

MORGAN. From a country pub.

JUDITH. Oh — oh — please, I can't bear it.

KIT (*splendid*). It's what I've wished for, for so long, Mrs. Pratt. Only — only — (*she falters*) we're leaving Killycreggs.

MRS. PRATT. Leaving Killycreggs?

JUDITH (*to Kit*). You're not, dear.

LOFTUS. Leaving Killycreggs!

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

KIT. Yes. Judith has sold it to Mr. — to Francis Morgan.

JUDITH. It's not as bad as it sounds, Mrs. Pratt. Kit will be here always, but it will be a help to Francis to have the place as an appendage to his hotel.

MRS. PRATT. A phwat?

JUDITH. An appendage — a sort of extra place for his guests.

MRS. PRATT. Yous are making a hotel of it?

MORGAN. Why not?

LOFTUS. Why not? (*Bewildered, but speaking quickly and firmly.*) But — but of course that's impossible, utterly impossible. I —

JUDITH. There's no "I" about it, Loftus; get that into your head. You have nothing to do with it — yes, you have. For I'll give you the two hundred pounds you want; or rather Francis will, in return for what I'm bringing him — Killycreggs. You must go away and make your own life; this place is nothing to you.

LOFTUS. Nothing to me? But it's everything! I can't — I don't know how to say it — but it's me.

JUDITH. Nonsense. How can it be you?

LOFTUS. But it is. I'm it, it's part of me, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.

KIT (*softly*). The heir, Judith.

PRATT. The young master! But she can do what she likes with the place, Loftus.

LOFTUS. She can't — ever — not unless she's

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broke, and she isn't. She's only one of a generation. It's entailed ——

JUDITH. No.

LOFTUS. It is entailed, it is. Not by law, no; but by blood, by all the things that matter more than words scribbled by a lawyer on a bit of parchment. This lovely house, the pictures, the ancestors that look down from the walls, that river, the — oh, I don't want either of you to die for a hundred years, but it must come in the end to me or to my son. It's de Lury, de Lury, de Lury as long as two stones of it stick together. You're trying to do a monstrous thing, Aunt Judith; something outside nature.

JUDITH. I'm going to break nature for your sake.

PRATT. Your aunt hasn't been very happy here, Loftus. She wants to get away.

LOFTUS. I love her, I want her to be happy. Let her marry whom she pleases.

MORGAN. Thanks for your permission, young man.

LOFTUS (*very dignified*). Mr. Morgan, you've been very kind to me; there was a time when I would have been very glad to have worked for you, but now — I don't like my aunt, Miss de Lury, marrying into the Morgans. I don't approve of it.

MORGAN. You don't approve? Well, of all the damned cheek.

LOFTUS. Of all your damned cheek! Oh, I

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

don't know what I'm saying; I don't want to be rude, but it's as if others were talking through me; dead and gone de Lurys. Of course there have been misalliances before this, since I've come down here I've read our family history. There, I'm being rude to you again, Mr. Morgan, and I don't want to be; so let Aunt Judith go, but Killycreggs stands; it must — it must.

*(He throws himself into a chair; he is too agitated to continue. There is a strained silence.)*

MRS. PRATT (*sepulchrally*). A drop more sherry, Bob.

*(He fills her glass in silence.)*

SIR JAMES (*who has been in the background, forgotten*). Judy, my dear, I loved you once; we were parted because of an old man's interference and this young man's father's prejudice. Aren't you interfering now more than you have a right to? You've your chance of happiness; grab it. Why spoil his?

JUDITH (*mumbling*). I'm trying to save him from Killycreggs. From his charm, from its charm.

SIR JAMES. He loves something beautiful, this house. Francey and I prowled round it before we rang the bell. It's lovely. An old house; associations. Your father was a damned bigoted old man, but he had the guts to kick me out, and he was right, according to his lights. I could never have lived up to this

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place; Loftus can. He's flesh of Killycregg's flesh. You felt thwarted when you weren't allowed to marry me; he's going to feel thwarted all his life if he's not going to be allowed to belong to Killycreggs, if Killycreggs isn't going to be allowed to belong to him. Judith, be big, be as noble as I think you are, as noble as you look.

JUDITH (*dully*). Very well; I'm beaten. I take it back, Francis, all I said this morning. I won't marry you; I've nothing to bring you. I'll stay on at Killycreggs; I'll keep the place warm for "the young master".

MORGAN. What are you saying?

JUDITH. Just that. I won't marry you.

MRS. PRATT. You've got your congee, Fran-  
cey Morgan.

MORGAN. Whatever that means, ma'am, I've got nothing of the kind. Judith, do you think for a minute I wanted you for the sake of Killycreggs?

JUDITH. We had planned to make such a lovely hotel of it.

MRS. PRATT. An appendage!

MORGAN. Ah, to hell with the hotel idea. Let them live on here in their elegance—Miss Kit and the young master. Maybe in ten years' time, Judith, they'll be glad to sell it back to us for a song.

JUDITH. I won't want it.

MORGAN. No. You're too soft.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

JUDITH. Soft? . . . I'm not young.

MORGAN. Younger than I am.

JUDITH. I've no money — only Killycreggs, and that's gone.

MORGAN. I'll see you get your share out of the estate.

JUDITH. I've been so ill — you never knew it, nobody did except Dr. Pratt. You're marrying a sick woman. I won't let you.

PRATT. She's as sound as a bell now, Francey. But a long holiday would do her a world of good.

MORGAN. Six months of a honeymoon?

PRATT. The very thing. . . . My dear, darling girl, no one has ever loved you before.

JUDITH (*half laughing, half crying, looking at SIR JAMES*). He did.

MORGAN. Him? A painter?

SIR JAMES. Remember, Francey, she was very young. Calf love.

MORGAN. I was in love one time with a female nurse at the asylum.

MRS. PRATT. Then I wish you had married her.

MORGAN. I hadn't seen you then, ma'am.

PRATT. Now, now; Ellie, my dear.

MARGARET (*appearing*). The dinner is served, miss.

(*She disappears.*)

LOFTUS (*filling glasses*). And there's still a round of sherry.



KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

MRS. PRATT. Only a teeny drop for me, Mr. Loftus.

LOFTUS. Nonsense. We haven't drunk yet to the happy couple.

MRS. PRATT. To the brim, then. I own I'm pawtial to sherry.

LOFTUS. Doctor, you've no glass.

PRATT. I never —

LOFTUS (*whipping out a glass*). Nonsense, you must. A de Lury engagement and you one of the clan!

PRATT. All right.

SIR JAMES. Judith, I want you to give Loftus that old portfolio of drawings of mine; he's told me about them. They're probably awful, but they're worth money. I'll give you the name of my dealer, Loftus. Give them to him, Judy, as a wedding present.

LOFTUS. But I'm not getting married.

SIR JAMES. Oh yes, you are. To Killycreggs, for life.

JUDITH. You're welcome to them, Loftus, except —

LOFTUS. I know. That lovely sketch of you twenty years ago? I'll frame it handsomely and it will hang in Francey's drawing-room.

JUDITH. You must stop, or I shall cry.

MRS. PRATT. What's there to cry about, me dear? I think now it's all gorgeous.

KIT (*low, to SIR JAMES*). Thank you, Jimmy.

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

SIR JAMES. I know I'm right; I know it's right.

LOFTUS (*filling MORGAN's glass*). Is it forgiven, Francey?

MORGAN. Uncle Francis, if you please, in future. (*With a big nudge.*) You young divil!

LOFTUS. I'll be borrowing your cars.

MORGAN. You will not.

LOFTUS. No, I won't. I wouldn't be seen dead with your old Fords. . . . Now, everybody. To Aunt Judith and Francey Morgan. Years and years of happiness.

*(They all drink with suitable murmurs of congratulation. KIT kisses JUDITH with emotion.)*

KIT. Everything you ever wished for, darling.

MORGAN. I must have an excuse for emptying my glass. Here's thanking you all, and here's to Miss Kit and Master Loftus, may they live long and happy at Killycreggs. Drink to them, Judith. (*He and JUDITH do so.*)

JUDITH (*to KIT*). My dear, forgive all the stupid things I said. . . . The soup will be getting cold. Jimmy, will you take Mrs. Pratt in; Francis, you're beside me and Bob; and Loftus — oh, we can sort ourselves. Go on, please. (*They start to go. MORGAN hangs back. LOFTUS is naturally last.*) Go on, Francis, I want just two words with Loftus.

*(MORGAN goes.)*

KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT ACT

JUDITH. Forgive me, my dear. I think I love Killycreggs as much as you do — maybe more. I'm glad now, but I'm afraid for you — so afraid for you. Will you be good, very good? Will you work hard at Killycreggs? I'll never work there again.

LOFTUS. You'll only be fifteen miles away.

JUDITH. It won't be the same thing. It's — oh, I'm frightened for you.

LOFTUS. You mustn't be. Killycreggs is my destiny.

JUDITH. I'm frightened.

LOFTUS (*lightly*). I know. You're afraid of the fatal de Lury charm.

JUDITH. I am.

LOFTUS. You old darling. I haven't a particle of it, but I'll try to copy you.

JUDITH. Me?

LOFTUS. Yes, you. Don't you know that you have it pressed down and running over? More than anyone. More than Aunt Kit.

JUDITH. Blather!

LOFTUS (*kissing her*). Yes, darling, just blather; just de Lury blather. Come along and face iceberg soup.

*(He tucks her under his arm and they make for the door.)*

JUDITH. Put out the lights, Loftus.

*(He does so; a grey dismal light comes through the thin curtains.)*

### III KILLYCREGGS IN TWILIGHT

JUDITH. I don't like it, Loftus. I'm afraid, afraid.

LOFTUS. Silly; silly.

*(The light in the hall outside is bright and he swings her into it; he shuts the door. The room is left in twilight.)*

THE END



**IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?**

(DRAMA AT INISH)



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a sharp upward-pointing stroke on the right side.

FOR  
DOLLY





This play, under the title *Drama at Inish*, was first performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on February 6, 1933, with the following cast:

JOHN TWOHIG . . . . .	W. O'Gorman
ANNIE TWOHIG . . . . .	Ann Clery
LIZZIE TWOHIG . . . . .	Christine Hayden
EDDIE TWOHIG . . . . .	Joseph Linnane
PETER HURLEY . . . . .	Eric Gorman
HELENA . . . . .	Nora O'Mahony
MICHAEL . . . . .	Rex Mackey
CHRISTINE LAMBERT . . . . .	Gladys Maher
HECTOR DE LA MARE . . . . .	Paul Farrell
CONSTANCE CONSTANTIA . . . . .	Elizabeth Potter
JOHN HEGARTY . . . . .	Fred Johnson
TOM MOONEY . . . . .	J. Winter
WILLIAM SLATTERY . . . . .	Don Barry

## CHARACTERS

JOHN TWOHIG, *of the Seaview Hotel, Inish.*  
ANNIE TWOHIG, *his Wife.*  
LIZZIE TWOHIG, *his Sister.*  
EDDIE TWOHIG, *his Son.*  
PETER HURLEY, *the local T.D.*  
HELENA, *a Servant.*  
MICHAEL, *the Boots.*  
CHRISTINE LAMBERT.  
HECTOR DE LA MARE, *an Actor.*  
CONSTANCE CONSTANTIA, *an Actress, his Wife.*  
JOHN HEGARTY, *a Reporter.*  
TOM MOONEY, *a Civic Guard.*  
WILLIAM SLATTERY.

- ACT I. A private sitting-room in the Seaview Hotel. A  
July morning.
- ACT II. The same, early evening, ten days later.
- ACT III. The same, a week later; morning.

## ACT I

*Inish is a small seaside town in Ireland, of not much importance save for the three summer months, when it is a point of attraction for people seeking sea breezes and a holiday. It has boarding-houses but only one hotel of any size — the Seaview Hotel — owned by MR. JOHN TWOHIG, who is the most important man in the town, chairman of most of its committees and a genial despot. We are looking at a private sitting-room in the hotel, a bright, comfortable, unpretentious room, well-worn furniture, perhaps a piano, certainly a side-board ornamented by a fern or an aspidistra. There is a siphon of soda-water on the side-board, half a dozen glasses, a decanter of port. No fire burns in the grate, for it is a fine summer morning and sunshine is streaming through the window. There is a small table in the middle of the room and a larger table against the wall. This table is littered with letters and bills, and the confusion is being made worse by a middle-aged woman — MISS LIZZIE TWOHIG — who is distractedly hunting through the papers. She is a pleasant-looking woman, well dressed, but obviously a spinster. After a little ineffectual*

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT

*hunting she goes to the door, opens it and calls.*

LIZZIE. Helena! Helena!

*(HELENA appears; a neat little servant just over twenty.)*

HELENA. You called, ma'am — miss, I mean?

LIZZIE. I should think I did call; I've been calling you for the last hour. Where at all have you been?

HELENA. I was getting the hins out into the back-yard.

LIZZIE. Why couldn't Michael have done that?

HELENA. Sure Michael's gone to meet the train.

LIZZIE. It can't be that late. *(She looks at her watch.)* My gracious, it's gone half-eleven; the train will be in any minute.

HELENA. It's in already, miss; I heard it puffing and I in the yard.

LIZZIE *(in a great fuss)*. Well now, Helena, we must keep clear, cool heads. There's quite a crowd of people arriving on that train, but there's no need for us to get into a fuss; quite the contrary, quite the contrary. 'Twould be a queer thing if we weren't able to deal in a quiet business-like way with half a dozen or ten guests.

HELENA *(coolly)*. Yes, miss, to be sure.

I            IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

LIZZIE. If you'd only come the first time I called you ——

HELENA. Sure I was with the hins, miss.

LIZZIE. I know, I know. Where's Master Eddie?

HELENA. Gone to the train, miss.

LIZZIE. Why so?

HELENA. I don't know, miss. He put on his new suit after breakfast, and I heard him telling his pappy he was going to meet the train.

LIZZIE. Oh, to be sure, to be sure. Miss Lambert's amongst the arrivals. Which brings us back to business, Helena. She'd better have number twelve.

HELENA. She don't like that room, miss; 'tis too noisy. 'Tis number tin she always has.

LIZZIE. Very well. Ten for her. Then there's Mr. Cronin and Mr. Hunt ——

HELENA. The men about the land?

LIZZIE (*with dignity*). The gentlemen from the Land Commission. Let them have twelve and thirteen.

HELENA. Nayther of them will look at thirteen. Them Commissioners are very suspicious.

LIZZIE. Dear, dear, what a bother. Well, give them eleven and twelve.

HELENA. The master said no one was to go into eleven till he'd have the bed repaired.

LIZZIE. Well, we'll give them nine and ten.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT

HELENA. Sure you've put Miss Lambert into tin.

LIZZIE (*growing more and more distracted*). Good gracious me, what'll we do at all, at all?

HELENA. 'Tis easy enough, miss. What's wrong with fifteen? To be sure it's a double bed, but Mr. Hunt would be glad of it. Sixteen stone if he's an ounce and ——

LIZZIE. No. I'm keeping that room for Mr. de la Mare and Miss Constantia.

HELENA (*shocked*). Mr. —— and Miss Constantia! Glory, miss!

LIZZIE. It's quite all right, Helena. Actresses they are —— I mean she's an actress and so is he —— I mean he's an actor and so is —— well, anyhow, they're man and wife these years and years. O'Hara or some name like that I believe they are really.

HELENA. I see, miss.

LIZZIE. Where were we at all? Miss Lambert in number twelve ——

HELENA. Let you leave it to me, miss, I'll straighten it out. (*She gabbles off*) Mr. Hunt number twelve, Miss Lambert tin, Mr. Cronin fourteen, and the play-actors in fifteen.

LIZZIE. I believe there are one or two others coming, but I've lost the bit of paper.

HELENA. It doesn't matter, miss; sure there's lashings of rooms.

LIZZIE. That's a good girl, that's a good girl. But mind, no fuss or excitement, be cool and

I                    IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

business-like. I suppose the master's gone to the train too?

HELENA. Yis, miss. And the mistress is in her bedroom trying on some dresses came from Dublin by the first post.

LIZZIE. More dresses? And what about the one she got for the races only ten days ago?

HELENA. I know, miss. Stacks of them she has, but she said she'd be out at the theatre every night nearly for the next month —

LIZZIE. Oh yes, of course; I forgot. Ah, here's the first arrival. (*For the door opens and admits* MISS CHRISTINE LAMBERT *and* EDDIE TWO-HIG. CHRISTINE *is a capable-looking handsome young woman of twenty-five; EDDIE a nice but rather soft young man a year or two younger.*) Well, Miss Lambert, it's welcome you are. How are you at all, at all?

CHRISTINE (*letting herself be kissed*). Good-morning, Miss Twohig, how are you? You're looking splendid.

LIZZIE. I can't complain, thank God.

CHRISTINE. And how are you, Helena?

HELENA. Very well, miss.

LIZZIE. It's been a grand summer so far, hasn't it?

CHRISTINE. Yes, indeed, but Dublin has been stifling. I was glad to get out of it.

LIZZIE. I'm sure you were. Ah, well, the sea breezes will soon bring the colour back to your cheeks — not indeed that you're looking



IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT

pale, but nowadays there's no telling the natural bloom from the false.

CHRISTINE. Oh, Miss Twohig!

LIZZIE. Only my little joke, dear. You mustn't mind me. Sure when you're young you might as well be dead as not be in the fashion. Don't I remember. Helena, run and make Miss Lambert a cup of tea.

CHRISTINE. Please don't bother.

LIZZIE. No bother at all. I always have one myself about this hour to shorten the morning. Hurry, Helena.

HELENA. Yes, miss.

*(She goes out.)*

CHRISTINE. I had breakfast on the train.

LIZZIE. Sure that's hours ago. What you should have is a cup of tea and a nice little nap and then you'll be in smart shape for your lunch.

CHRISTINE. Indeed, no. I must put in an appearance at the factory before lunch and let the secretary know I've arrived.

LIZZIE. Ah, let the factory wait. How long will you be staying?

CHRISTINE. Three or four weeks, I suppose. It always takes about that long to get through the factory's accounts.

LIZZIE. That's grand news for Eddie. How well he found out the train you were coming on!

EDDIE *(blushing)*. Ah, go on, Aunt.

CHRISTINE. I wouldn't believe it was Inish

I            IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

station if Eddie wasn't waiting on the platform for me.

LIZZIE. Indeed, but he's the faithful boy. I can tell you, Miss Lambert, there's girls breaking their hearts in Inish for Eddie, but not a look will he look at one of them. No, his heart's stuck away up in Dublin.

CHRISTINE. Now Eddie, there's a reputation you're getting.

EDDIE. Ah, go on, Christine.

LIZZIE. While Helena is wetting the tea I'll just slip upstairs and see is your room all right. Poor Helena — willing enough, but no system. We're putting you into number — number — which number at all is it?

CHRISTINE. I'm generally in ten.

LIZZIE. That's it. Ten of course. "Helena," says I, "ten Miss Lambert's accustomed to have and ten she must get." Well, I'll be back in a few minutes. I'm leaving you in careful hands.

*(She goes out.)*

CHRISTINE. It's nice to be back again, Eddie.

EDDIE. Is it? Do you really mean that?

CHRISTINE. Of course I do. And it was very nice of you to meet me at the station, and that's a very nice suit you've got on. In fact everything's very nice.

EDDIE. I got it last week for you — I mean, against your coming.

CHRISTINE. That's great extravagance.

Didn't you get one before you came up to Dublin for the Spring Show?

EDDIE. I did.

CHRISTINE (*teasing*). I don't believe your Aunt Lizzie is right at all. I believe you've fallen for that pretty Miss MacCarthy — or would it be for the little Mulcahy girl — Bubbles Mulcahy?

EDDIE. You know that's not true. I — I'd like to ask you something, Christine.

CHRISTINE. Same old question, Eddie?

EDDIE. Yes.

CHRISTINE. Isn't it a bit soon? I'm not here an hour yet.

EDDIE. I can't help it. Have you — have you changed your mind at all?

CHRISTINE. No, Eddie, not at all. You're a dear nice boy and I'm very fond of you, but I don't want to marry you.

EDDIE. I see. (*He is depressed for a few seconds but quickly cheers up.*) Well, maybe you'll change your mind. What about a round of golf this afternoon?

CHRISTINE. Imposs. You forget I'm down here to work. After tea, maybe; it's light till nine these evenings.

EDDIE. I'm taking you to the theatre to-night.

CHRISTINE. The theatre? The Pavilion? Oh, Eddie, I'm sick of those comic troupes; I don't even get a good laugh out of them. They're very stupid and vulgar.

EDDIE. They're not comics, just you wait and see. We're running a first-class repertory company this summer.

CHRISTINE. You're what?

EDDIE. Intellectual sort of plays, *you* know.

CHRISTINE. You're joking.

EDDIE. Not at all. You know how Inish has been going down the last two summers, people going more and more to Shangarry Strand just because the bathing was better, and then the troupe that was here last summer was the limit — too vulgar altogether, real low.

CHRISTINE. The Comicalities? Wasn't that what they called themselves?

EDDIE. Yes. Anyhow the Monsignor got a lot of complaints about them, so he and Pappy and Peter Hurley the T.D. put their heads together and decided something must be done to improve the tone of the place, and the De La Mare Repertory Company is opening their season tonight.

CHRISTINE. For goodness' sake! I don't think I ever heard of them.

EDDIE. Oh, they're very high-class, I believe; do nothing but serious stuff; Russian plays and all that sort of thing, just what you like. I've a pair of season tickets, so we'll go every night.

CHRISTINE. I'll go tonight certainly to sample them. What's the play?

EDDIE. I forget. There's a handbill in the bar. I know Wednesday night is *A Doll's*

*House* — I remember that because it's such a funny name; and either Thursday or Friday there's *The Powers of Darkness* — isn't there a play called that?

CHRISTINE. Yes. But Inish will never support that sort of stuff.

EDDIE. We'll give it a try, anyway. Didn't you see Pappy at the station?

CHRISTINE. Yes, in the distance, in the middle of a lot of queer-looking people.

EDDIE. That's them. I mean that's the Repertory Company. The two principals — Mr. de la Mare and Constance Constantia — are stopping here. We're putting them up free because, of course, Pappy owns the Pavilion. I suppose they'll be along in a few minutes; they had a deal of baggage to look after.

CHRISTINE. Well, I think this is most exciting. I'm sure they'll be more comic than the Comicalities, anyway.

EDDIE. I was dead keen for them to come.

CHRISTINE. Why, Eddie?

EDDIE. I feel very ignorant along with you, Christine. You get books in Dublin and go to plays and things, and I don't get a bit here. I thought these plays would improve my mind; like.

CHRISTINE. You've a very nice mind, Eddie — leave it alone.

EDDIE. Ah, no; I'm only a kind of a country lout. You're right to keep on refusing to

marry me. But maybe by the end of the summer —

CHRISTINE. Now, now; no more of that.

(HELENA puts her head in, all excitement.)

HELENA. The play-actors are coming, miss. Michael has a truck of luggage — such boxes you never seen, and you're in number tin, miss, in case Miss Twohig makes any mistake.

CHRISTINE. All right, Helena.

HELENA. And I'll be a bit delayed with your tea.

(She goes.)

CHRISTINE. Eddie, I'm feeling quite excited; aren't you?

EDDIE. No.

CHRISTINE. Have you no imagination? Suppose that in another moment that door opens and a ravishing young actress comes in and —

EDDIE. Ssh!

(For the door is opening and admits, first, big genial JOHN TWOHIG; he ushers in CONSTANCE CONSTANTIA and HECTOR DE LA MARE. Goodness knows what age CONSTANCE is; her dyed dark-red hair may make her look older than she is, instead of younger, as she hopes. Although it is summer she is wearing a heavy fur coat; her hand-bag is an exaggeration. She moves with beautiful grace — but knows she does. She has played so many parts that her face has

*little character of its own; just now it is made up a little too tragically for a bright summer morning. HECTOR is very black in the hair, very black in the clothes, very pale in the face.)*

JOHN. Come in, come in. This is the sitting-room I was telling you about, Miss Constantia. It's our private room, but you're welcome to use it.

CONSTANCE. Ah, what a charming room! Isn't it divine, Hector?

JOHN. Oh, Miss Lambert, how are you? You got here before us. This is Miss Constance Constantia and Mr. Hector de la Mare.

CONSTANCE. How-do-you-do?

*(Mutual shaking of hands between the three.)*

JOHN. Miss Lambert comes from Dublin; she's with that big firm of accountants in O'Connell Street and she comes down to audit the accounts of our factory twice a year and see we don't make off with the money. She's quite an old friend of ours and that boy of mine is breaking his heart over her.

EDDIE *(blushing, as usual)*. Ah, go on, Pappy.

JOHN. Come and shake hands with Miss Constantia, Eddie. Where's your manners?

EDDIE *(shaking hands)*. I'm pleased to meet you.

CONSTANCE. Charmed.

*(He shakes hands with HECTOR.)*

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JOHN. Has Eddie been telling you, Miss Lambert, about the plays?

CHRISTINE. Yes, indeed. I think it's a splendid idea. I'm awfully interested.

HECTOR. An experiment, Miss Lambert, an experiment. A seaside audience — to me, I confess, an unknown quantity.

CONSTANCE. You remember, dear, that week in Southsea three years ago?

HECTOR. I had forgotten. We played ——?

CONSTANCE. To miserable audiences of ignorant people.

HECTOR. Did we? But I meant, what play?

CONSTANCE. *The Lyons Mail*.

HECTOR. Ah, I never quite do myself justice in melodrama. That tour was a mistake — financially and artistically — yes, a financial and artistic mistake.

JOHN. That was a pity, then. But won't you all sit down? There's a comfortable chair, Miss Constance — Miss Constantia, I mean.

CONSTANCE. Thank you.

*(They all sit.)*

HECTOR. Yes, Miss Lambert, I now confine myself entirely — with the co-operation of Miss Constantia — to psychological and introspective drama. The great plays of Russia, an Ibsen or two, a Strindberg — I think very little of the French.

JOHN. The Monsignor was dead against French plays.



IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT

HECTOR. He was perfectly right. The French theatre is superficial; no feeling for the psyche; of the flesh, fleshy.

JOHN. Tch, tch, tch.

HECTOR. The English theatre —

JOHN. We thought, things being the way they are, it was safer to keep off English plays this summer.

HECTOR. You lose but little. Of course there is Shakespeare.

*(A reverential little murmur of "Of course" runs round the room.)*

CONSTANCE. My Lady Macbeth — do you remember, Hector, in Dundee?

HECTOR. Perfectly, darling. A most marvellous performance, Miss Lambert.

CHRISTINE. I love *Macbeth*. The last Lady Macbeth I saw was Mrs. Patrick Campbell's.

CONSTANCE *(with gentle pity)*. Ah, poor Mrs. Pat. Did you like her?

CHRISTINE. Immensely.

CONSTANCE. Really?

*(LIZZIE and ANNIE — MRS. TWOHIG — come in. ANNIE matches her husband, large and genial; her clothes are a little too smart for that hour in the morning.)*

JOHN. Here's my wife. Annie, this is Miss Constantia.

ANNIE. How are you, Miss Constantia?

CONSTANCE. How-do-you-do?

JOHN. And my sister, Miss Twohig.

I            IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

(*Mutual greetings.*) Mr. de la Mare, my wife, my sister. (*Mutual greetings.*) My sister helps me to run the hotel and the shop; it gives my wife more time to be thinking of dresses and fal-lals.

ANNIE. Get away with you, John. Oh, Miss Lambert, dear, I never saw you. How are you?

CHRISTINE (*kissing her*). Splendid, Mrs. Twohig.

ANNIE. You're looking very smart. That's a doaty little suit you're wearing; where did you get it?

JOHN (*to the others*). What did I tell you? Clothes all the time.

ANNIE. Wisha, don't mind John. He'd be the last to want to go around like an old rag-bag. Won't you all sit down?

CHRISTINE. I'll just slip up to my room and wash my hands. I'll be down again to have my cup of tea with Miss Twohig.

(*She goes to the door.*)

EDDIE. Will I carry your case up?

CHRISTINE. No, Michael will have taken it up, I'm sure. Stay where you are.

(*She goes out.*)

ANNIE. I think we might all have a little tea.

JOHN (*going to the sideboard*). I have something here that will do Mr. de la Mare better than tea after his long journey. What about a drop of whiskey, sir?

HECTOR. I rarely touch anything in the

daytime, not till after the show, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

JOHN. Well, glory be to goodness, could any day be more exceptional than today — high-class plays in Inish? Come, now, I'll take no denial.

HECTOR. Well, if I must, I must.

LIZZIE. I warn you, Mr. de la Mare, my brother will find some excuse to make every day and every hour of every day exceptional. Helena fills that decanter every morning, and many's the evening we have to send down to the bar for a fresh bottle.

JOHN. Ah, what matter, woman dear. A little drop for you, Miss Constantia?

ANNIE. Nonsense. A nice creamy cup of tea is what Miss Constantia would like. Don't I know?

JOHN. Can't you let her speak for herself?

CONSTANCE. I confess I am partial, occasionally, to a small whiskey and soda.

JOHN. That's the spirit. These women of mine think of nothing but tea, tea, tea all the day long. Bring along the siphon, Eddie.

EDDIE. I have it here, Pappy.

LIZZIE. I hope we'll be able to make you comfortable here, Miss Constantia. If everything's not to your liking, you must just come to me. Helena — the servant — is as willing as can be, but flighty; no head on her at all.

CONSTANCE. I am sure we shall be most comfortable.

LIZZIE. This place is quite a home from home — that's what a traveller wrote in our book one day; very clever and terse, don't you think?

CONSTANCE. Oh, quite.

JOHN (*having mixed and handed the drinks*). Now, Miss Constantia and Mr. de la Mare, here's to your very successful season.

HECTOR. And here is to you, sir, and to Inish. May our visit be profitable to the town — spiritually, I mean.

CONSTANCE. I should like to associate myself with Mr. de la Mare's remarks.

JOHN. Faith, I hope it will be profitable in every way. Them Comicalities last year had me on the brink of ruin.

ANNIE. Indeed they were very low.

HECTOR. I hope, Mr. Twohig, you will not set too much store by material profits. Often, alas, plays of this kind draw very small audiences and make very little money.

JOHN. And why do you go in for them so, if it's not a rude question?

HECTOR. Because, Mr. Twohig, they may revolutionise some person's soul.

ANNIE. Ah, sure, we've had enough of revolutions.

HECTOR. I mean that some young man in the audience may see himself there on the stage, in all his lust, in all his selfishness, in all the cruelty of his youth — a young man such as your son.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT

*(He suddenly swings on EDDIE, who shrinks away.)*

LIZZIE. Is it poor Eddie? There never was a more innocent boy.

HECTOR. I meant nothing personal. *(And now it is JOHN who inspires him.)* Or some middle-aged man, in all outward appearances respectable, will see himself stripped naked, the sham cloak of virtue torn from his shoulders, and he will stand exposed as the rotten sham he is. *(And now it is LIZZIE'S and ANNIE'S turn.)* Women will see themselves vain, shallow, empty-headed, scheming for power, scheming for husbands, scheming for lovers.

ANNIE. Heaven defend us!

LIZZIE *(awed)*. 'Tis like a mission.

HECTOR. It *is* a mission, Miss Twohig, a tremendous mission where the pulpit is the stage and the great dramatists preach the sermons. I am myself a convert.

JOHN. Do you mean you used to be a Protestant?

HECTOR. I am not speaking in the strictly religious sense. It happened more than twenty years ago. I was a very young man — in Cork. There used to come to the Opera House once or twice a year a company headed by Octavia Kenmore and her husband in a repertory of Ibsen plays. They played to wretchedly small audiences, and I went every night — to the gallery, for I was very poor. I saw every rotten

sham in Cork exposed on that stage. I could translate every play in terms of the South Mall or Montenotte or Sunday's Well. I saw myself on the stage — young puppy as I was —

ANNIE. Ah now, Mr. de la Mare, I am sure you were never that.

HECTOR. I was. But those plays changed the current of my life.

JOHN. And did they change Cork?

HECTOR. They did not. We played there two summers ago: the same miserable little audiences of cynical people, the same corruption, public and private.

JOHN. Ah well, here in Inish we don't think much of Cork. But indeed you'll find us quiet, decent people. I don't think there's much here to expose at all. Is there, Annie?

ANNIE. Sorra a thing. 'Tis too quiet we are: not that I want murders or big crimes or anything of that sort — God forbid — but we're often blue-mouldy for a bit of innocent scandal. We women can't live without that, you know. Amn't I right, Miss Constantia?

CONSTANCE. "To speak no scandal, no, nor listen to it." Ever my motto, Mrs. Twohig, ever my motto.

LIZZIE. And a very nice one too, my dear.

ANNIE. "Always merry and bright." That was someone's motto, wasn't it?

HECTOR. That, I believe, is an excerpt from some vulgar musical comedy.

(PETER HURLEY comes in. *An insignificant little mouse of a man.*)

JOHN. Ah, here's me bold Peter. Mr. de la Mare, I want to introduce our local T.D., Mr. Peter Hurley.

PETER. How are you?

HECTOR (*shaking his hand very formally*). I am honoured to meet you, Mr. Hurley.

JOHN. And this is Miss Constantia.

PETER. How are you, miss? 'Morning, Annie; 'morning, Lizzie.

ANNIE. }  
LIZZIE. } Good-morning, Peter.

JOHN. What about a drop of whiskey, Peter?

PETER. Ah, no, thank you, John.

JOHN. You could chance it; the Dail's not sitting now.

PETER. Things being the way they are, we might be summoned any minute.

HECTOR. And may I ask, Mr. Hurley, which party you represent?

JOHN (*who is getting PETER's whiskey*). Oh, Peter's a sound Government man. Aren't you, Peter? Always on the spot when your vote is wanted. He's not much of a speechifier, Mr. de la Mare, but he's a sound party man. Did you speak in the Dail at all yet, Peter? I don't believe you did.

PETER. I riz twice one day but someone else riz quicker.

HECTOR. "They also serve," Mr. Hurley, "they also serve who only stand and wait."

PETER. Thank you, sir.

JOHN. Never mind, Peter, my son, you'll come out strong one of these days. There's a whiskey for you — I won't take "no".

PETER. Thank you, John. Here's to us all.

CONSTANCE (*finishing hers and getting up*). Perhaps we should be going to the hall, Hector.

HECTOR. I'm afraid Murphy won't have the scene set for another hour.

LIZZIE. And it will be nearly time for your dinner then.

CONSTANCE. And I must rest all the afternoon or I shall be an utter rag.

HECTOR. I'll go down to the hall after dinner and see that everything is all right.

CONSTANCE. Oh, it's not that — it's that scene, the end of the fourth act — I'm so nervous about it.

HECTOR. You're word-perfect, darling.

CONSTANCE. Yes, I have it here (*touching her forehead*), but have I got it here? (*touching her heart*). Have I, Hector, have I?

HECTOR. I know what you mean. It doesn't vibrate.

CONSTANCE. Or the vibrations are wrong. I don't know, Hector, I don't know!

(*She is working herself up very effectively.*)

HECTOR. When the moment comes, it will come, right and true.



## IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

ACT

CONSTANCE. Oh, will it, will it?

HECTOR. It will. Take my hands. (*She takes them. They are standing looking into each other's eyes. He clenches her hands in his.*) IT WILL.

CONSTANCE (*faintly*). Thank you, Hector, thank you.

HECTOR. But to make assurance doubly sure, if the company will excuse us we'll retire to our room and go over the scene there.

JOHN. Certainly, certainly.

LIZZIE. What is it you want to do?

HECTOR. Just to run over a short scene that is in the play tonight. We can do it in our room.

LIZZIE. With actions?

HECTOR. With, as you say, actions. Of course without props.

ANNIE. Props?

HECTOR. Properties. The correct furniture, the samovar, the little empty cradle.

LIZZIE. Well, indeed, I've seen that room since all your boxes went up, and between them and the big double bed there's not room, as they say, to swing a cat. Besides, Helena hasn't the room tidied up yet.

HECTOR. Dear, dear.

JOHN. What's the matter with this room? It's a big airy room, and you're welcome to every bit of it. Sure when the Temperance Society was putting on *The Coiner* last winter, 'tis here they used to hold their practices.

HECTOR. But so inconvenient for you all.

JOHN. Not at all; we can go down to the bar, and I'm sure my wife will want to be showing Lizzie all the grand dresses she got from Dublin this morning. Come on, all of you.

CONSTANCE. It seems so cruel to disturb you.

JOHN. Not another word. Come along.

*(There is a general move to the door.)*

EDDIE *(low to his father)*. Pappy.

JOHN. Well, son?

EDDIE. Ask them could I stay.

JOHN. Stay? Nonsense.

EDDIE. Ask them, Pappy.

HECTOR. What is that?

JOHN. A bit of nonsense of Eddie's. He wants to stay and hear you.

HECTOR. No, no, my boy. Wait for the real thing tonight.

CONSTANCE *(dramatically)*. Hector, a moment. He must stay. They all must stay. I must have an audience. Even three or four people will make all the difference to me—tell me if I vibrate or if I do not vibrate. *(She swoops on ANNIE.)* Mrs. Twohig, I implore you, lend me your ears — and your heart. You are a mother. I am a mother in this play — an erring one, I admit, but still a mother. I entreat you, stay and hear me.

ANNIE *(kindly)*. To be sure I'll stay if that's the way you feel about it. And Lizzie too, I'm sure.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT

LIZZIE. I'll wait. Sure me tea is due any minute.

CONSTANCE. Thank you, oh, thank you. Hector, set the stage.

*(He considers the room for an instant and decides to have the stage on the side of the room facing the door. He instructs EDDIE to move the chairs and the table from the middle of the room. While this is going on —)*

PETER *(to JOHN)*. I have to be off. I've to see the Monsignor.

JOHN. Right-o, Peter. You'll be at the Pavilion tonight?

PETER. I will, to be sure.

*(PETER goes out.)*

HECTOR. Will you all sit over here, this side? *(He gets them seated in a little row facing the stage. CONSTANCE has taken off her coat and hat, and has seized a coloured shawl which has been draping a chair or a sofa and has put it over her head. HECTOR gets back into his overcoat and hat and turns up the collar of the coat.)* I needn't explain the whole play to you; this is the scene which closes the fourth act. The scene is a poor kitchen in Russia; there is a large Russian stove, a samovar of course — on this table *(placing the aspidistra on the table) —*

JOHN. A what?

HECTOR. A samovar. Of course you know what that is.

I                    IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

ANNIE (*digging JOHN in the ribs*). Of course.

HECTOR. Miss Constantia's name is Elina; she is a poor servant-girl whom I have betrayed earlier in the play. My name is Michael —

JOHN. Have they a name like that in Russia? I thought Michael was a good Irish name.

HECTOR. It is a very common name in Russia.

JOHN. And do they ever shorten it to Mick?

HECTOR. No. Well, she hasn't seen Michael for several years, and in the meantime she has had a baby.

LIZZIE. The creature!

HECTOR. This is the scene of their meeting. Perhaps Master Eddie would hold the book. (*He gives it to him.*) The bottom of that page, and don't prompt unless we really dry.

EDDIE (*bewildered*). Dry?

HECTOR. Fluff. (*Which is just as bewildering*).

CONSTANCE (*sitting in a chair and with her foot rocking an imaginary cradle*). I am rocking a cradle, an empty cradle.

ANNIE. In heaven's name, for what?

HECTOR. Ssh! Ready, Constance?

CONSTANCE. Yes. (*She starts to croon a Russian cradle-song —*)

Bala, bala, balaika,

Bala, bala, bala mo.

HECTOR (*coming in stamping his feet and shaking the snow off his coat*). I am looking for Serge Ilyvitch. I am told he lives here.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT

CONSTANCE (*not looking at him*). No one of that name lives here.

HECTOR. But Petro Petrovitch told me — Elina! You!

CONSTANCE (*looking at him now*). You! Michael!

HECTOR. Yes, it is Michael.

CONSTANCE (*rising slowly*). Why have you come back, back into my life?

HECTOR. I did not know you were here. You ran away from old Alex.

CONSTANCE. He beat me.

HECTOR. Where did you go?

CONSTANCE. To Moscow, to Niji, to Tobolsk, to — anywhere.

*(She sits down again and starts rocking and crooning. HELENA comes in with a small tray and two cups of tea on it. She stands unnoticed in the background listening.)*

HECTOR. Why are you rocking a cradle, Elina?

CONSTANCE. Can you ask that, Michael?

HECTOR (*peering at the imaginary cradle*). But it is empty.

CONSTANCE. Indeed it is empty.

HECTOR. Why is it empty?

CONSTANCE. My baby is dead, *our* baby is dead, Michael.

*(She rises slowly.)*

HECTOR (*slowly, covering his face with his hands*). Our baby? I do not understand.

## IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

CONSTANCE. You do understand — betrayer.  
*(With a great cry)* Michael, Michael, give me  
 back my baby!

HECTOR. Elina —

*(HELENA lets the tray fall with a crash.  
 Everyone swings round in surprise.)*

ANNIE. }

LIZZIE. }

JOHN. }

EDDIE. }

Helena!

HELENA *(echoing CONSTANCE)*. Michael,  
 Michael, give me back my baby!

LIZZIE. You're crazed, Helena.

HELENA. Michael! Michael!

ANNIE *(rushing to her)*. 'Tis only play-acting,  
 child.

JOHN. Come now, my girl —

*(The door opens and MICHAEL the boots  
 appears, a good-looking, honest young  
 fellow.)*

MICHAEL. You were calling?

HELENA *(rushing to him and flinging her arms  
 round his neck)*. Michael, Michael, our baby!

MICHAEL *(trying to disengage himself)*. Here,  
 hold on —

HELENA. The baby, the baby!

MICHAEL *(backing out of the room)*. What baby?

HELENA *(going out with him still clinging to  
 him)*. Our baby, Michael, Michael.

*(They disappear; the words "Michael"  
 and "baby" fade away in the distance.)*

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT

JOHN. Thunder and turf! Annie, what's the meaning of all this?

ANNIE. Ah, don't bother me.

(ANNIE goes out quickly.)

HECTOR. A highly strung temperament, no doubt.

LIZZIE (*picking up pieces of cups*). And the lovely tea gone.

EDDIE. What was she saying, Pappy?

JOHN. I know no more than yourself. Just nonsense.

(CHRISTINE comes in.)

CHRISTINE. Is anything the matter? I heard shouting. Oh, is that my tea?

LIZZIE. That's your tea, Miss Lambert, I'm sorry to say.

EDDIE. It got spilled, Christine.

CHRISTINE. Yes, Eddie; I gathered that it had got spilled.

JOHN. It slipped out of Helena's hand.

CHRISTINE. I see. (*She senses that everyone is a little awkward and busy with their own thoughts, and is silent.*) I think I'll go down to the factory.

EDDIE. Will I come with you?

CHRISTINE. No. Stay here. I'll be back in an hour. (*ANNIE comes in.*) I'm going out for an hour, Mrs. Twohig. I won't be late for dinner.

ANNIE (*half listening*). Yes, dear. Eddie, I'd like you to go and have a walk on the strand for yourself.

EDDIE. Why, Mammy?

ANNIE. There's no why. Off with you.

EDDIE. Yes, Mammy.

CHRISTINE. See me to the factory first, Eddie.

EDDIE. Right-o.

(CHRISTINE *and* EDDIE *go out.*)

HECTOR. I apologise, Mrs. Twohig, if anything we did or said has caused a reverberation —

ANNIE. I sent her to her room, but not before she shouted it out in the bar and three men heard her.

JOHN. But in heaven's name what's it all about?

ANNIE. You may as well know; it will be all over the town in an hour. Two years ago — do you remember when I sent Helena to Dublin to have her eyes tested?

LIZZIE. She stayed there four months with your sister, didn't she?

ANNIE. It wasn't her eyes; she had got into a little trouble here and I wasn't going to desert her, a nice little girl like that with no one belonging to her. . . . Well, the baby died.

JOHN. Heavens above! I knew nothing of this.

ANNIE. Of course you didn't, nor Lizzie, nor one of you.

JOHN. But — Michael —?

ANNIE. It was Michael the boots.



IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?      ACT I

JOHN. Michael that's here now?

ANNIE. Of course not. The Michael we had two years ago — don't we call every boots Michael to save trouble, none of them ever staying more than a few months? It was that Michael that hopped off to America with your new suit — d'you remember?

LIZZIE. But she said Michael here.

ANNIE. I know. The play-acting turned her head for the moment. It's most unfortunate. God forgive you, Miss Constantia. I'd better go and see after her.

LIZZIE. I'll come with you, Annie.

*(ANNIE and LIZZIE go out.)*

JOHN. Well, well. Imagine her keeping that from me all this time. Aren't women the dickens? And Helena such a nice little girl. I'd better go to the bar and see what's after happening.

*(JOHN goes out. HECTOR is about to follow, but CONSTANCE, who has remained rather apart from all this, a little wrapt, stops him.)*

CONSTANCE. Hector!

HECTOR. Yes, dear?

CONSTANCE. I am not afraid for tonight. My vibrations were right.

*(He takes her in his arms and kisses her reverently.)*

CURTAIN

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*The same scene, ten days later. Late afternoon with no sunlight, in fact raining heavily. HECTOR is seated at the writing-table doing accounts. CONSTANCE comes in in mackintosh and hat.*

HECTOR. Are you going already? Isn't it very early?

CONSTANCE. I know, but I have some mending to do. I tore my dress at the matinee and I must mend it before the show.

HECTOR. If things continue as they are going you'll be able to have a dresser next week. Imagine that!

CONSTANCE. Imagine! I haven't had a dresser for years.

HECTOR. I've just told Murphy to reserve another row of seats for tonight and till further notice.

CONSTANCE. Isn't it marvellous?

HECTOR. It just bears out what I have always said: give people the right stuff, well put on and intelligently acted, and they will support it.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT II

I hear there weren't a hundred people in the picture-house last night.

CONSTANCE. Splendid! Oh, those pictures, how I hate them.

HECTOR. The first three days of this week are fourteen pounds two and threepence better than the first three days last week; we're a clear twenty pounds to the good already; we'll be over forty by the end of the week.

CONSTANCE. We'll be able to settle O'Byrne's account; he's so odious, threatening us with writs.

HECTOR. And we can settle with Kelly and Shea and that hotel in Clonmel.

CONSTANCE. Would there be enough for me to send Mother a little? Poor darling, she's so hard up.

HECTOR. Of course. Let's send her five pounds. That'll be a nice surprise for her. Oh — and I was thinking of Uncle Bill.

CONSTANCE. What about him?

HECTOR. I thought he might join us. He's a good old character actor.

CONSTANCE. Darling, he's very old, and he does get so very drunk.

HECTOR. I know. But he ought to have a share in our success. After all, he taught me my first stage lessons.

CONSTANCE. Then let's just send him some money.

HECTOR. All right. I will. But you must spend something on yourself, darling.

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CONSTANCE. Oh, I want nothing but a few dresses. And what will my boy get for himself?

HECTOR. I was wondering if I could pick up a car cheap — a small one, of course. I believe it would pay for itself very quickly; it would save so much in the way of railway fares.

CONSTANCE. Of course it would. That's a splendid idea. Oh — and there's May, we forgot May.

HECTOR. So we did. She must get something, of course.

CONSTANCE. Of course. Something really substantial.

HECTOR. We won't have anything left at the end of the week if we're not careful.

CONSTANCE. The bills can all wait; they must. I always think family comes first, don't you?

HECTOR. Undoubtedly. After all, it is we who are making the money, and we have a right to spend it any way we like.

CONSTANCE. Of course.

*(She shivers.)*

HECTOR. Cold, darling?

CONSTANCE. A little. The weather is depressing, isn't it? If we weren't doing such good business I'd be in the blues.

HECTOR. Strange how the weather broke the day after we opened. Not a gleam of sun since. However, it all helps business.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT II

CONSTANCE. I was wondering whether we couldn't run a children's matinee next week, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or something like that. I could be Titania.

HECTOR. That's an idea. I could play Bottom.

(LIZZIE comes in extricating herself from a wet mackintosh.)

LIZZIE. Oh, Miss Constantia, what an afternoon! I'm dripping. Wouldn't you like a cup of tea?

CONSTANCE. We've had ours, thanks, and I'm just off to the Pavilion.

LIZZIE. I hope you had a good audience this afternoon. I wasn't able to go, unfortunately, the hotel takes so much of my time.

CONSTANCE. We had a very good audience.

LIZZIE. I'm glad. What is on tonight?

CONSTANCE. *The Powers of Darkness* again.

LIZZIE. Oh yes, that's where they murder the baby in the cellar. I thought that was a very good one.

HECTOR. An extraordinarily powerful play.

LIZZIE. Yes, indeed. Talking of babies and all that reminds me that the business about Michael and Helena just goes from bad to worse. Annie had a terrible time this afternoon with Michael's mother.

HECTOR. I'm sorry to hear that. What happened?

LIZZIE. It seems the mother drove over from

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Shangarry Strand in an ass-cart and she gave Annie all sorts; said that her boy's character had been taken away and that the town had no right to be saying — as they *are* saying — that there's nothing for poor Michael to do but marry Helena. She blames it all on Annie for calling Michael out of his name — his real name, it seems, is Aloysius — blaming Annie, mind you, who is the best friend the poor girl ever had!

CONSTANCE. That seems very unfair. Ah, it's what always happens; the woman pays, to the uttermost farthing.

LIZZIE (*sighing deeply*). Yes indeed, it's a troublesome world.

HECTOR. I'm sure you can't have many troubles, Miss Twohig, with your nice home here and your brother and sister-in-law so fond of you and the interest of looking after the hotel.

LIZZIE (*sighing more deeply*). I don't seem to take any interest in the hotel any more. I don't know what's come to me. Anyway, it's not the same as having a real home of my own.

CONSTANCE (*with soft sympathy*). Of course it's not. *I* know.

Oh, to have a little house!  
To own the hearth and stool and all!  
The heaped-up sods upon the fire,  
The pile of turf against the wall.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT II

To have a clock with weights and chains,  
And pendulum swinging up and down!  
A dresser filled with shining delph,  
Speckled and white and blue and brown.

LIZZIE. Exactly, dear. Ah, it takes a woman to understand a woman — if you'll excuse me, Mr. de la Mare. I lay awake all last night thinking of that play by — I never get the name right — it's like a cold in the head.

HECTOR. A cold in the head? I confess —

CONSTANCE. I know who she means, darling. Tchekov, isn't it, Miss Twohig?

LIZZIE. That's it, dear. Tchekov. Do you remember the woman in it? She had her chance and threw it away, and there she was drifting into middle-age, alone and neglected, just like myself.

CONSTANCE. You threw away your chance, Miss Twohig?

LIZZIE. I did, dear, I did. If I hadn't been a foolish girl, I'd now be a T.D.'s wife.

HECTOR. No!

LIZZIE. A fact, Mr. de la Mare.

CONSTANCE. Which T.D.?

HECTOR. Hush, Constance. We have no right to probe into an old sorrow.

LIZZIE. It's such an old story that I can talk of it now. Yes, indeed, I might this minute be Mrs. Peter Hurley, T.D.

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HECTOR. Dear, dear!

LIZZIE. And my picture in the papers and asked to parties in Dublin and all. And if I cared to, I could dress better than Annie — I've kept my figure better than she did — but what is the use of dressing grand? Sure fine clothes are a poor consolation for a broken heart.

HECTOR. Very true.

CONSTANCE. Why did you throw him over?

LIZZIE. I didn't throw him over, Miss Constantia. Peter Hurley behaved shameful. We were never exactly engaged — thank God, I never gave him the chance to jilt me — but he behaved shameful all the same. He played with my affections, and in the end without so much as by your leave or with your leave took himself off and married a small publican's daughter from the County Clare.

HECTOR. Too bad, too bad. Well, you must remember that "Sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier days". You must be brave, Miss Twohig, and live for the next generation; teach them to see clearer, think straighter, be more fearless.

LIZZIE (*with a sniff*). I must, I suppose.

(ANNIE comes in and sinks into a chair.)

ANNIE. I'm jaded.

CONSTANCE. Indeed you look worn out, Mrs. Twohig.

ANNIE. Such a day! I never thought I'd



live to be called the things that woman called me this afternoon.

HECTOR. Did Mr. Twohig not deal firmly with her?

ANNIE. I never set eyes on John since dinner-time.

LIZZIE. He spent the whole afternoon in the bar.

ANNIE. Did he?

LIZZIE. You'll have to speak to John, Annie; 'tis terrible the way he's drinking.

ANNIE. Ah, not at all.

LIZZIE. Though he's my own brother, I'll have to say it. You're married to a man who's on the high road to becoming a drunkard.

ANNIE. You've no right to say things like that, Lizzie, about your own brother. I hope I see John's faults as clearly as the next, but he is not, never was, and never will be a drunkard.

LIZZIE (*with her usual sigh*). Well, I only hope you're right.

ANNIE. Everything seems going astray lately, the weather and all.

HECTOR. Except the Pavilion, Mrs. Twohig; don't forget the Pavilion. Though you don't patronise us often, I'm sorry to say.

ANNIE. I don't know why, but I couldn't bring myself to go after the second night. They made such a terrible show-up of things. I remember Lizzie here saying the day you came — you were telling us the sort of plays they

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were — “ ’Tis like a mission ”. And I suppose it is. Maybe I’m stupid and flighty, but I don’t hold with those plays at all — of course, it’s only here I’d say such a thing; I’d never breathe a word outside for your sakes and John having the Pavilion. And sure you couldn’t wear nice clothes going to that class of play; the best you could do would be a sort of half-mourning.

LIZZIE. I couldn’t live without those plays. I was mad that I couldn’t get to the matinee this afternoon.

(MICHAEL puts his head in the door.)

ANNIE. Am I wanted, Michael?

MICHAEL. You’re not, ma’am, but did you hear the terrible thing that’s after happening Jim Clancy?

ANNIE. No, what is it?

MICHAEL. Threw himself off the end of the pier.

ANNIE. For pity’s sake!

LIZZIE. Dear, dear, dear!

(Everyone rises in concern.)

ANNIE. Was he drowned dead?

MICHAEL. No, ma’am. Bruised. The tide was out.

ANNIE. Thank God.

HECTOR. What was the reason for it?

MICHAEL. No one knows, sir. He kem out of the Pavilion — he’d been watching the play — and he went to the end of the pier and stood there for a bit and then lepped over. The

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT II

Fehily boys were watching him; 'tis they pulled him out.

CONSTANCE. Only bruised?

MICHAEL. Yes, ma'am; 'tis one of them congested piers, and when the tide is out there's only a sup of water. He must be out of his senses to think he could drown there. Now if he'd gone to the White Rocks there'd be some chance for him.

ANNIE. Well, indeed, I'm glad he didn't.

MICHAEL. Well he's roaring on the bed in the mother's place and saying it's there he will go the next time he has a free minute. The doctor's with him; he says he's sort of melancholy. (*JOHN'S voice is heard calling "Michael".*) There's the boss calling for me.

(MICHAEL goes out.)

LIZZIE. Ah, it's a sad, sad world.

ANNIE (*sitting down again*). Everything seems going astray.

HECTOR. Yet it is interesting to find a temperament like that in Inish, We Irish, we're very like the Russians really.

CONSTANCE. Quiet on the surface but with such hidden depths of feeling — like Miss Twohig here.

ANNIE. Is it Lizzie?

HECTOR. Yes. Your sister-in-law has allowed us to know a little of her tragedy.

ANNIE. Her tragedy? What under heaven are you talking about?

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(JOHN *bursts in; he has some papers in his hand.*)

JOHN (*to ANNIE*). Do you see these?

ANNIE. I do, to be sure.

JOHN. Do you know what they are?

ANNIE. They look like bills.

JOHN. Then they look like what they are — bills, bills, bills. This one from Kelletts, this from Arnotts, these two from shops in Grafton Street I never heard the names of before. Woman, dear, do you want to ruin me?

ANNIE. I do not.

LIZZIE. You've been drinking, John.

JOHN. I have not, and if I had itself wouldn't I have good reason to try and drown my troubles? Where in heaven's name am I to get money to pay all these?

ANNIE. There can't be so much in them after all.

JOHN. Not so much? Look here — nineteen pounds and elevenpence. And here — ten pounds nineteen and sixpence. And here —

LIZZIE. It's not very nice to be saying these things before Miss Constantia and Mr. de la Mare.

JOHN. Ah, keep out of this, you.

CONSTANCE. As a matter of fact I'm just going.

HECTOR. So am I.

JOHN. I don't want either of you to go.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT II

What I've got to say can be heard by the whole world. I've tried to rear Eddie well and respectable and leave a nice business behind for him, and here's my wife stabbing me in the back all the time, buying a mountain of clothes, hats, ribbons and the like to flaunt around the town.

CONSTANCE. I'm sure Mrs. Twohig becomes them well and does you credit. I think you should be proud of her.

LIZZIE. Indeed he should, Miss Constantia.

JOHN (*to ANNIE*). You say nothing?

ANNIE. No, but I'm thinking a lot.

JOHN. Slowly my eyes are being opened, and I begin to see what a fool I've been all these years, just making a home for you, making a nest for you, making — a — a —

LIZZIE. Making a doll's house for her.

JOHN. Exactly. A doll's house. You took the words out of my mouth.

HECTOR (*aside to CONSTANCE*). You know, dear, it *is* the curious converse of Nora Helmer's case.

JOHN. But it has got to stop. If it doesn't, one or the other of us leaves this house.

LIZZIE. John, you wouldn't dream of such a thing.

JOHN. Why wouldn't I? I've my own life to lead, haven't I? I'm not just a blank cheque-book, am I?

(PETER HURLEY *comes in*.)

PETER. I dropped in, John, to say I have to

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go to Dublin by the evening train. The Dail meets tomorrow.

JOHN. Well, isn't that a pity. You can't be with me to the play tonight?

PETER. No, John, worse luck. Though indeed I think it's a shame the way I'm taking Annie's seat every night.

ANNIE. You're welcome to it, Peter.

PETER. Thank you, Annie. You've been out, Lizzie? (*She looks stonily in front of her.*) I was asking had you been out?

LIZZIE. I think, Mr. Hurley, in the future the less conversation you and I have together the better.

PETER. Lizzie! Why so?

LIZZIE. I needn't say.

ANNIE. What ails you, Lizzie?

LIZZIE. Please ask me no questions, Annie; I've said my say.

JOHN. Sure you can't leave it like that and Peter such an old friend of yours.

LIZZIE (*with a sniff*). Old friend, indeed!

JOHN. Well, isn't he? Didn't you play together as childer?

LIZZIE. Maybe that's what I'm thinking of, and thinking, too, of the way he treated me when I wasn't a child any longer.

PETER. How I treated you?

LIZZIE. Yes, but we'll say no more about it. You can leave me with my thoughts.

PETER. What does she mean, John?

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JOHN. I don't know, Peter. What's the matter, Lizzie girl?

*(But LIZZIE won't answer.)*

HECTOR. Miss Twohig is, no doubt, thinking of the rather heartless way you behaved long ago.

PETER. Heartless?

HECTOR. Yes, heartless. When you abandoned her — for another.

PETER. I never did anything of the kind. There never was anything between us except maybe a bit of innocent skylarking now and again.

LIZZIE. Oh, Peter!

CONSTANCE. It may have seemed only skylarking to you, Mr. Hurley, but it broke Miss Twohig's heart.

ANNIE. Did it, Lizzie? I never heard a word of this.

JOHN. Nor I. Such codology was never known. Don't be making an old eejut of yourself, Lizzie.

LIZZIE *(rising with dignity)*. I am sorry I intruded my personal tragedy on you all; I apologise. And now, John, your "old eejut" of a sister will take herself away.

*(And she goes out.)*

JOHN. Well, can you beat that?

ANNIE. Ah, don't mind her. Did you hear about Jim Clancy?

JOHN. Of course I did. Everyone's talk-

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ing of it. I'm sorry for the poor boy, and I'm sorry for ourselves too, for there'll be one less in the audience every night, Mr. de la Mare. Jim never missed a performance once.

HECTOR. I see. A real enthusiast.

PETER. But, John, I'm uneasy about Lizzie. It's not in my mind that I've anything to blame myself about, and anyway it was all twenty and more years ago, and we've been the best of friends all along, and she's been a good friend to my wife too.

JOHN. Don't give it a thought, Peter. Some little fancy that came to her. Maybe the weather's accountable for it; I don't feel at all myself this evening.

PETER. I see. Well, I'll be off.

JOHN. Will you be staying in Dublin over the week-end?

PETER. Not at all. I'll be home for Saturday. I wouldn't miss the play that night for anything. Good-night to you all.

EVERYONE. Good-night.

(PETER goes out.)

CONSTANCE. I must go too. Hector, are you ready to come?

HECTOR. Yes, I may as well go. (*He goes to the door.*) You'll be at the play tonight, Mr. Twohig?

JOHN. Of course.

CONSTANCE (*at the door*). And Mrs. Twohig?

ANNIE. No, thank you, I'll stay at home and



read a magazine I've just bought.

CONSTANCE. Indeed. What magazine is that?

ANNIE (*a little grimly*). *Comic Cuts*.

CONSTANCE. Indeed!

(*They make a dignified exit, not certain whether to be offended or not.*)

JOHN. Did you mean that for a slap at them, Annie?

ANNIE. They can take it any way they like.

JOHN. You don't care much about them, I think.

ANNIE. Oh, I suppose they're all right.

JOHN (*trying to make it up*). Annie, I spoke too sharply to you a while ago and I'm sorry.

ANNIE. You have a right to be. You disgraced me before the whole room.

JOHN. Still, those bills — they were a bit of a slap in the face, coming all by the one post.

ANNIE. I'll see that you're not troubled with any more. I'll never get another dress in Dublin as long as I live; old Peg Murnane can run me up some old skirt and blouse if ever I want a new one — once a year maybe. And I suppose I can sell what I have to some second-hand place and get a few pounds for them, and I'll hand every penny I get to you.

JOHN. Now, now, I don't want you to do anything of the sort. All I'm asking for is a little moderation.

ANNIE. I'm not going to have my own

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husband telling me I "flaunt" around the town.

JOHN. I shouldn't have said that; I don't know what came to me.

ANNIE. I think I know.

JOHN. The drink? Maybe I had one too many this afternoon.

ANNIE. I wasn't thinking of the drink at all.

JOHN (*getting frightened*). Maybe it's getting a hold of me, like in that play where the man went raving mad and threw a knife at his wife.

ANNIE. I'd like to see you attempt to throw so much as a spoon at me.

JOHN. And there was that other play — ah, but sure it was vodka they were drinking, not decent Irish.

ANNIE. You take those plays too seriously; sure what are they, only a way of passing an evening?

JOHN. Maybe I do, but they're powerful all the same. Anyway, those same plays are doing well by us. I hear Shangarry Strand is a wash-out — of course the bad weather has killed the bathing — but even so we have them bet. The people who have taken houses for the month are fit to be tied because they went there instead of here, and they're having to run two extra buses across here each evening to bring them to the Pavilion. I believe the circus there is empty, and the manager of the

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Royal Hotel is trying Shakespeare readings in the lounge, but even that won't keep people from dropping over here. We're on the crest of the wave. (*EDDIE comes in; he looks years older, he probably has gone into horn-rimmed glasses. He sits down at the writing-table. His parents observe him and, after a pause—*) Well, Eddie, son, how's tricks?

EDDIE (*deep in a book — he has brought two in with him*). Oh, all right.

(*Pause.*)

ANNIE. Did you get a swim today?

EDDIE. No.

JOHN. Too wet, I suppose. (*Silence.*) D'je hear about Jim Clancy?

EDDIE. Yes.

(*Silence.*)

JOHN. Are you coming to the play tonight?

EDDIE. Of course.

(*Silence.*)

JOHN. What's the old book?

EDDIE. Just a play.

JOHN. What's it called?

EDDIE. *The Dance of Death.*

JOHN. Oh.

(*Silence. But ANNIE tries to make things pleasanter.*)

ANNIE. When I was Eddie's age I always liked plays with a bit of dancing in them.

(*Silence.*)

JOHN. And what's the other book?

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EDDIE (*with a murderous look at him*). It's called *Fathers and Children*, and it's not a play; it's a novel by Turgenev, and it's about the way the old misunderstand the young and how damnable everything is.

JOHN. I see. (*There is a dreadful silence. JOHN gets up quickly.*) I'm going to get my tea. Are you coming, Annie?

ANNIE. I'll stay for a bit with Eddie. (*JOHN goes out.*) What's wrong, Eddie?

EDDIE (*still sullen*). Nothing.

ANNIE. I don't like you being rude to Pappy.

EDDIE. I wasn't rude.

(*ANNIE sighs; gives it up. CHRISTINE comes in and ANNIE rises with relief.*)

ANNIE. Oh, Miss Lambert, dear, I know you're famished for your tea. It should have been ready half an hour ago, but I can't do anything with Helena these days. I'll go and hurry her up.

(*She goes out. CHRISTINE sits down rather wearily.*)

EDDIE. Tired, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Just a bit. The accounts seemed specially tangled today, and then the weather — doesn't it give you the hump?

EDDIE. No, it doesn't. I like it like this. When you think of the terrible things that go on in the world every day — every day, Christine — it seems as if the sun had no right to shine at all.

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CHRISTINE. That's a dreadful thing to say, Eddie.

EDDIE. Isn't it the truth?

CHRISTINE. No, I'm sure it's not. I think there are lots of lovely things in the world. Little children, and flowers, and the sea and — and oh, all sorts of things.

EDDIE. But the children seem to suffer the worst of all, and the flowers die, and the sea wrecks ships, and —

CHRISTINE. Oh, come off it, Eddie.

EDDIE. What do you mean?

CHRISTINE. You'll be giving me the blues next. What's the matter? You're looking so solemn the last few days.

EDDIE (*very solemn*). Perhaps I'm beginning to realise what life means.

CHRISTINE. If you know that, you'll know a lot, Eddie — more than the wisest man ever knew.

EDDIE. I think one learns through suffering.

CHRISTINE (*involuntarily*). Good Lord! Excuse me, Eddie. . . . Tell me, are you ever going to go to work?

EDDIE. I do work.

CHRISTINE. Not what I call work.

EDDIE. Do you want me to go away somewhere; get a job?

CHRISTINE. Maybe.

EDDIE. Why should I? I have this place to walk into some day, I help Pappy in the business,

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I do quite a lot of work.

CHRISTINE. That seems — soft.

EDDIE. I'd like to improve people — or rather help them to improve themselves.

CHRISTINE. But have you no ambition for yourself?

EDDIE. There was one time I had.

CHRISTINE. When was that?

EDDIE. You know very well.

CHRISTINE. Oh!

EDDIE. You killed it stone dead when you turned me down time after time.

CHRISTINE. I want to live my own life, free and independent, or else marry a husband I can respect — someone who is doing big important work, not a — a ———

EDDIE. — son of a country hotel-keeper with a grocery business and a bar at the back of the shop? Go on, say it.

CHRISTINE. You've said it.

EDDIE. Thank you. I can see your point, Christine. You'd never have liked to be my doll, my plaything.

CHRISTINE. No, Eddie, I wouldn't.

EDDIE. You are quite right. But I, too, Christine, have my life to live, my destiny to work out, my ———

CHRISTINE. Oh, Eddie, come off it. Can't you be friendly and nice the way you used to be? Why, we were as jolly as possible the day I arrived last week. Don't you remember?

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EDDIE. Maybe I didn't realise ——

CHRISTINE. Well, stop realising. Be nice, Eddie.

EDDIE. You've not been so nice to me.

CHRISTINE. I'll try to be.

EDDIE. Well, here it is for the last time: Will you marry me?

CHRISTINE (*wearily*). Oh, forget it, Eddie.

EDDIE (*with real passion*). Never, never, as long as I live. Christine, will you marry me?

CHRISTINE. No.

EDDIE (*with dignity*). Thank you. I am sorry I bothered you. I won't do it again.

CHRISTINE (*trying a little to flirt with him*). I rather liked being bothered, you know.

EDDIE. Did you? That shows how little you understood.

(LIZZIE comes in, in excitement.)

LIZZIE. Miss Lambert, you're a woman of the world; what's a suicide pact?

CHRISTINE. Good heavens! Surely you weren't thinking — what are you talking about?

LIZZIE. Tom Mooney of the Gardai has been telling me — it's all over the town — a young couple at Shangarry Strand turned the gas on and left a bit of a note, posted it to the girl's mother in fact, saying 'twas a suicide pact; but sure it was a penny-in-the-slot metre and it gev out, and I suppose the young couple thought better of it, or maybe they had no change in the

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house; anyway, they're alive and little the worse of it.

CHRISTINE. What a wonderful escape. Who were they?

(ANNIE comes in.)

LIZZIE. The young fellow had a job shifting scenery with Mr. de la Mare and the wife sold chocolates in the theatre. They'd come and go by the bus every day to Shangarry. The man was dismissed last Saturday because he'd be all night with his eyes and ears glued to some crack in the scenery listening to the plays and never doing a tap of work; but he came back every night this week, and the girl used to smuggle him into the back of the pit. It must be on the head of losing his job that he tried to destroy himself.

ANNIE. There's some queer madness in the air. Everyone's behaving strange and different.

EDDIE (*with sincere passion*). Why should you think them mad? Mightn't what they were going to do be the most sensible thing in the world? To kiss — and die!

ANNIE. Eddie, that's wicked, shameful talk. Where's your religion — and your common sense?

EDDIE. Oh, common sense be hanged! Is life worth living?

LIZZIE. I don't hold with suicides, Annie; I never did. But in a way, Eddie's right.



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There are times when we all feel that life is not worth living.

ANNIE. I never felt that way, thank God. Did you, Miss Lambert?

CHRISTINE. Eddie has just got a bad touch of growing-pains, Mrs. Twohig. I wouldn't take him too seriously.

EDDIE. That's right; throw my youth in my face!

CHRISTINE. I didn't mean to do anything of the kind, Eddie.

EDDIE. You've always treated me as a child, and Mammy has too. Well, I'd have you know I'm no longer a child.

ANNIE (*soothing*). Of course you're not, son.

EDDIE (*rising*). And I'd have you know that I've just asked Christine for the last time if she'll marry me, and she's said "no", so that's finished — for ever. And let you and Pappy stop making jokes about me and her, or I'll — I'll — well, I'll do something anyway that will make you sorry.

(*He bangs out of the room.*)

ANNIE. Wisha, the poor boy! (*She looks appealingly at CHRISTINE.*) Miss Lambert, dear?

CHRISTINE. I'm afraid it's no use, Mrs. Twohig. I'm very fond of Eddie, but that's as far as it goes.

LIZZIE. Poor Eddie! I know what he's going through, I know.

ANNIE (*sharply*). Lizzie, don't be a fool.

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LIZZIE (*with a little tragic laugh*). Ah, that's what they'll all call us, Eddie — fools, fools!

ANNIE. Glory be to goodness, I think you're astray in the head too. Come on, Miss Lambert, dear, till I get you your tea.

(ANNIE and CHRISTINE go out. *A thunder-shower must be coming up, for since CHRISTINE'S entrance the room has grown very perceptibly darker. LIZZIE sits in the shadows, happily sighing to herself.*)

LIZZIE. Poor Eddie and poor me! Ah, Peter, Peter!

CURTAIN

SCENE II

*The scene is the same as before. The table is laid for supper for two. The standing-lamp at the desk is lit. The time is about eleven o'clock at night. CONSTANCE comes in, followed by HECTOR. CONSTANCE goes to the fireplace, throws her wraps on the armchair and then lights the brackets at the fireplace. HECTOR is at the table.*

HECTOR. Cold beef again.

CONSTANCE. Any pickles?

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HECTOR. Only onions.

CONSTANCE. How odious!

HECTOR (*pouring himself a whiskey*). I have quite made up my mind; that scene at the end of the third act must go.

CONSTANCE. My scene with Petro Petrovitch?

HECTOR. Yes. It is unnecessary; the act ceases with my exit. The rest is sheer padding.

CONSTANCE (*nastily*). Strange how the audience responds to the "padding" — and your exit never gets a hand.

HECTOR. Because you deliberately kill it by making that move.

CONSTANCE. I have to move then. I shall continue to make that move and I shall continue to play that scene. Hector, if you cut that scene, I shall refuse to play.

LIZZIE (*enters*). Oh, here you are. I'm trying to get your supper right for you.

HECTOR. Where is Helena?

(*He pronounces the name in a classical manner.*)

LIZZIE. Helena is incapable with the toothache. Eddie's been out of the house since six — he hasn't been at the play — Annie's gone to bed in tears and John stumped up to his room the minute he got back from the Pavilion. The whole house is on my shoulders.

CONSTANCE. Poor Miss Twohig!

HECTOR (*looking at the table*). Dear, dear. Well, you seem to have got together a very

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appetising little supper, Miss Twohig.

LIZZIE. I hope everything will be to your liking.

CONSTANCE (*sitting*). I'm too tired to eat anything.

HECTOR. You must keep up your strength, darling.

CONSTANCE. I suppose I must. (*She drinks.*) Pass me the onions, Hector.

HECTOR (*passing the onions*). Darling! A little bread?

CONSTANCE. The crusty end.

LIZZIE. What sort was the audience tonight.

HECTOR. Deplorable. I don't think there were thirty people in the hall. The whole town was looking at the fire.

CONSTANCE (*bitterly*). Imagine people looking at an ordinary little fire when they might have been watching a masterpiece.

LIZZIE. I'll have to admit I slipped out to have a look at the fire myself.

HECTOR. And remember, darling, it was not quite an ordinary fire. I am told that Mr. Maloney is suspected of having set fire to his shop himself, and is likely to be arrested on the charge of incendiarism.

LIZZIE. Poor Tim Maloney! As honest a man as ever breathed.

HECTOR. Of course it's only a suspicion. But ah, Miss Twohig, what depths and depths there are in people's characters.

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LIZZIE. I know, I know. There's my tragedy ——

HECTOR. Exactly. Is there any cheese?

LIZZIE. I'm sorry to say we're run out of cheese.

HECTOR. No matter. Will you eat nothing yourself?

LIZZIE. Ah no, thanks. Anything I took at this hour of night would prey on my stomach. It amazes me to see Miss Constantia able to eat so heartily.

CONSTANCE. I've taken the merest mouthful.

LIZZIE. You're welcome to everything, dear. Well, I must leave you for a few minutes. I must see is everything locked up downstairs. As I told you, the entire house is on my shoulders tonight. (*She starts to go, meeting MICHAEL in the door.*) What is it, Michael?

MICHAEL. Nothing, miss.

LIZZIE. Sure it must be something.

MICHAEL. 'Tis a kind of message I have for Mr. de la Mare.

LIZZIE. Well, out with it.

(MICHAEL *hesitates.*)

HECTOR. What is it, my boy?

MICHAEL. 'Tis sort of private.

LIZZIE. Oh, more troubles and mysteries! What's the world coming to when the boots as good as tells me to leave the room? I'm bothered out of my life.

(*She leaves the room angrily.*)

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CONSTANCE. And what is the message, Michael?

MICHAEL. 'Tisn't exactly a message, ma'am.

HECTOR. No?

MICHAEL. But I couldn't say what I have to say before the ould one.

HECTOR. The old one?

MICHAEL. Ould Lizzie Twohig.

CONSTANCE. Not a respectful way to talk of your master's sister.

MICHAEL. Ah, what matter? I was wondering, sir — At school I was always grand at recitations —

HECTOR. Yes.

MICHAEL. I want to be an actor, sir.

CONSTANCE. Michael!

HECTOR. An actor! You?

MICHAEL. Yes, sir.

HECTOR. No, no, my poor boy. Any profession save that.

MICHAEL. Why so?

HECTOR. I think if I had my life to live again I'd rather be the boots in the Seaview Hotel than Hector de la Mare.

CONSTANCE. Hector!

MICHAEL. Is it you, the boots?

HECTOR. Yes.

MICHAEL. You don't know what you're talking about. Do you know the kind of life I lead? Up every morning at half-six, cleaning knives, cleaning boots, knocking up commercial

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travellers out of their beds — powerful sleepers every one of them; rousing Helena to get their breakfast; carting their grips to the early train; snatching a bite of breakfast myself, God knows when; feeding the hens and the brood sow; doing a bit of odd gardening; meeting every train that comes and goes; serving in the shop; carrying coals and whiskey up here; never seeing my own bed till midnight or later — ah, get along with you, sir.

HECTOR. Even so, it would be better than —

MICHAEL. Now, if I was the like of you, I'd be travelling the length and breadth of Ireland, maybe England, maybe the whole wide world itself. I'd be speaking grand speeches and wearing fine clothes. I'd be having people frozen cold in their seats with the terror I'd put on them — the way you stiffened myself out the other night. Or I'd have them rocking themselves sick with the laughing — not indeed that *you* are much of a comic, Mr. de la Mare. I'd be leaving a name after me that would be remembered through the land. I'd not just be "Michael the Boots at the Seaview" — and even the same Michael not being my christened name at all.

CONSTANCE (*touched*). I shall always call you Aloysius in the future, Michael.

MICHAEL. Thank you, ma'am.

HECTOR. You'd like to give up your nice

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place here and your kind master and mistress to drag from one small town to another, playing in small halls and dirty little theatres; staying in frowsy lodgings; with no home, no permanent abiding-place; seeing yourself getting older and shabbier every year —

CONSTANCE. Hector, what are you saying?

HECTOR (*almost hysterically, seeing himself for a moment as he really is*). It's true, Constance, it's true; you know it is. Saying to myself, "Shall I ever get a chance? Must it always be the smalls of England and Ireland for me? Oh, my God, to play — even for one night — a great tragic part in a great theatre, thousands hanging on every word I uttered —"

MICHAEL (*fired*). That's it, sir, that's it. I know, sir. But if you'd only hear me recite.

HECTOR. No. No!

MICHAEL. Please, sir.

CONSTANCE. Let him, dear. It can do no harm.

HECTOR. Very well. Proceed.

MICHAEL. What'll I do? A comic or a serious.

HECTOR. I should prefer something serious.

MICHAEL (*after thinking a little*). Well, I learned this after I left school. It wasn't in the reading-book, but I took a fancy to it. I'm told it was written by a man who walked off one day and was never heard of again. 'Tis called "Ballyvourney", which is a place in the



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mountains of County Cork and a great place for the Gaelic.

*(He recites the poem with a serious, simple intensity:)*

He came from Ballyvourney and we called  
him "Ballyvourney",

The sweetest name in Erin that we know,  
And they tell me he has taken now the last,  
the last long journey,

And it's young he is, it's young he is so  
very far to go.

Before our eyes, just like a flower, we saw his  
life unfolding,

As day by day he grew in bloom in early  
manhood's grace:

Ah, Death, to pluck the flower and to snatch  
from our beholding

The head of rippled gold and the happy  
morning face."

Sure that's a sad ould poem. Maybe you'd like  
this better.

*(He rattles off, half singing, half reciting:)*

While going the road to Sweet Athy,  
Hurroo — Hurroo —

While going the road to Sweet Athy,  
Hurroo — Hurroo —

While going the road to sweet Athy,  
A stick in my hand and a drop in my eye,  
A doleful damsel I heard cry,

"Och, Johnny, I hardly knew ye.

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With drums and guns and guns and drums  
The enemy nearly slew ye,  
My darling dear, you look so queer,  
Och, Johnny, I hardly knew ye ”.

LIZZIE (*who has come in at the last part of the verse*). In the name of goodness, what are you doing, Michael?

MICHAEL (*abashed*). Nothing, miss.

LIZZIE. Nothing? Nonsense. Off to bed with you. You were shocking late getting up this morning.

MICHAEL. Yes, miss. Good-night to you all.

CONSTANCE. } Good-night.  
HECTOR. }

(MICHAEL *exits*.)

LIZZIE. You shouldn't let him be bothering you with his capers, Miss Constantia.

CONSTANCE. I like Aloysius.

LIZZIE. Aloy-who? Oh, Michael, you mean?

HECTOR. You may have something of a genius there, Miss Twohig.

LIZZIE. Ah, nonsense. No genius ever could come out of a backward place like Shangarry Strand — or Inish itself, for that matter.

HECTOR. “ It bloweth where it listeth — ”  
(*Rising*.) Well, well, I think I shall retire. I have had a very pleasant supper, Miss Twohig, and for that, many thanks. Are you for bed, Constance?

CONSTANCE (*rising*). Yes, indeed, I'm worn out. Good-night, Miss Twohig.

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LIZZIE. Good-night, dear.

HECTOR. Good-night, Miss Twohig.

*(The two go out. LIZZIE does a little tidying-up at the table and switches off the lights at the fireplace. EDDIE enters. He looks more gloomy and distraught than ever.)*

LIZZIE. Oh, Eddie darling, you're back. I was worried about you the whole evening. Where were you?

EDDIE. Just walking and walking and walking.

LIZZIE. I know. You wanted to be alone with your thoughts.

EDDIE. Yes. It's foolish of me, I suppose.

LIZZIE *(sits)*. Foolish? That's what they call us, Eddie, foolish. 'Tis little they understand.

EDDIE. I'll take my books and go to bed.

LIZZIE. Before you go let you sit down for a minute. I want to talk to you.

EDDIE. What is it?

*(Sitting.)*

LIZZIE. Ah, no — sit here — at my feet.

EDDIE *(sitting at her feet)*. We're like the aunt and the nephew in that play on Monday night.

LIZZIE. Aren't we? Eddie, I'd like to tell you the story of my life.

EDDIE. And I'd like to tell you about myself, Aunt Lizzie.

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LIZZIE. You see, Peter and I knew each other from the time we were little children.

EDDIE. I was grown-up when I first met Christine.

LIZZIE. We lived next door to each other, and we saw one another every day of our young lives.

EDDIE. I'd never see Christine only twice a year, unless I chanced to go to Dublin.

LIZZIE. He had an elder brother that everyone was struck on but I could see nothing in him. It was Peter for me always.

EDDIE. When I first met Christine, Aunt Lizzie, it was like — like —

LIZZIE (*with a touch of impatience*). Wait till I tell you about Peter.

EDDIE. It was like sunshine in a dark cellar.

*(They now speak together, paying no attention to what the other is saying, entirely engrossed in making pretty, untrue pictures for themselves.)*

LIZZIE. He was a year or two older than I was, a bright, curly headed boy. There was another boy — Jack Murnane — terribly gone on me, but Peter beat him one day, and after that he kept away from me. He'd bring me flowers and sweets, and he called me his little sweetheart. And as we grew older he learned to love me with a man's love, and one day he wanted to buy me a ring, but I wouldn't let him. He was afraid of his mother, and I think it was she who drove Peter from me —

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EDDIE. It was only two years ago, but it seems to me as if I had never lived until she came to Inish. I'd never cared about a girl in my life, only Katie Walsh and one or two others, and that was only to pass the time. I loved her from the minute I set eyes on her, but I was always a bit afraid of her. I was like a dog: she could whistle and I'd come to her. I've always kept a handkerchief she dropped one time: it's in the press in my room and sometimes I sleep with it under my pillow. I've never kissed her. I wouldn't dare . . . .

*(Somewhere about here the Curtain mercifully falls.)*

## ACT III

SCENE: *The same, a week later. Morning; dull, raining slightly. LIZZIE comes in, ushering in MR. HEGARTY, a young man.*

LIZZIE. Will you come in here, Mr.—  
Mr. ———

HEGARTY. Hegarty, John Hegarty.

LIZZIE. Oh yes, you told me, of course. Will you sit down, Mr. Hegarty? I'm afraid my brother is out and my sister-in-law too; they went out after breakfast and I haven't seen them since.

HEGARTY. That doesn't matter at all, Miss Twohig. I am sure you can give me all the information I want.

LIZZIE. Well, of course I can tell you about the hotel, seeing that I more or less run it. I can let you have a very nice room from about ———

HEGARTY. No, no. I'm afraid I'm not staying. I just want a little information.

LIZZIE. Information?

HEGARTY. I always think that in these little country towns there's no place like the hotel for gathering news. The hotel is the hub of the town, so to speak.

LIZZIE. Maybe.

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HEGARTY (*suddenly and dramatically*). Miss Twohig, why has Inish suddenly put itself on the map of Ireland?

LIZZIE. Sure it was always there — on big maps, anyway.

HEGARTY. Why has Inish suddenly become news? Not yet front-page news, but front-page news maybe tomorrow.

LIZZIE. Front-page? Oh, you're from a newspaper?

HEGARTY. I thought I had explained that. I'm not from any particular paper, I'm freelance. It's part of my business to read all the Irish papers every day, and during the last two weeks one word has caught my eye again and again. Inish! Attempted suicide at Inish. Boy breaks open till in shop in Inish. Respectable butcher called McClusky beats up his wife at Inish. Young couple attempt suicide pact, couple employed at Inish. Now I happen to know Inish. My sister and I spent a month here two summers ago, for our sins. It was very expensive, and it was deadly dull.

LIZZIE. Where did you stay?

HEGARTY. Not here. You were even more expensive. But that's not the point. The point is that during that month nothing happened. There wasn't even a decent dog-fight, and now all these things happen — in ten days. An outbreak of this kind doesn't come by chance. I've been putting two and two to-

gether — I believe I'm the first journalist in Ireland to put this particular two and two together, and I'm here this morning to try and find out what they make.

LIZZIE. I don't understand all you say, but sure there was nothing at the back of that boy breaking into McGarry's till except that he wanted money to go to the theatre. McGarry let him off, and Mr. de la Mare gave him a season ticket, and there's been no more about it.

HEGARTY. Yes, I hardly expected there was anything in that particular incident, but I've been all round the town this morning — I came from Dublin by the early train — I've been into shops and pubs, and I notice the strangest kind of attitude in the people. Everyone seems suspicious, watching everyone else, expecting something strange to happen. If you mention anyone to anyone else, you're met with a kind of veiled suggestion that they are not what they seem to be; that they have a shady past and are likely to have a blacker future. I hasten to add that no one has had a word to say against you, Miss Twohig.

LIZZIE. Did you mention my name?

HEGARTY. I don't think I did.

LIZZIE. Well, let you try mentioning it and see what happens. You're right, Mr. Hegarty; this town is full of gossipers and slanderers, and I could tell you things about some of them that



would make your hair stand on end.

HEGARTY. But they weren't like this two years ago. They just seemed nice, ordinary people, a little on the dull side. Come, Miss Twohig, there's something at the back of it all. What is it?

LIZZIE. Indeed, I couldn't tell you—unless it would be the weather. Rain every day for a fortnight.

HEGARTY. If rain were accountable for crime, all Ireland would have murdered itself long ago. No, no, it can't be the weather.

LIZZIE. Maybe it's politics. Them and the weather are about the only things we think of outside our own business.

HEGARTY. Yes, I hadn't thought of politics. It might be a curious result of recent legislation. Perhaps your local T.D. could help to elucidate this point.

LIZZIE. Is it Peter Hurley?

HEGARTY. Yes.

LIZZIE. You'd do well not to go near Peter Hurley; he's the deceiver if ever there was one.

HEGARTY. In what way?

LIZZIE. I'd rather not say; it's a personal matter. But be deceitful in one way and you'll be deceitful in every way. Isn't that right, Mr. Hegarty?

HEGARTY. I suppose so.

LIZZIE. Anyway, you can't see him today because he's away in Dublin at the Dail.

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HEGARTY. Oh yes, of course. They were having a very important all-night sitting last night.

LIZZIE (*laughing*). Imagine poor old Ireland depending on the votes of men like Peter Hurley. I have to laugh.

HEGARTY. The division was likely to be very close, I believe.

LIZZIE. Oh, they can depend on Peter. Peter'll vote the way he is told to vote. The creature hasn't the courage of a mouse. (*HECTOR and CONSTANCE come in. They look rather gloomy.*) Oh, come in, come in; this is a young gentleman from a newspaper — Mr. de la Mare and Miss Constantia — Mr. Hegarty.

*(Mutual greetings. Everyone sits down.)*

HECTOR. You wanted to interview me?

HEGARTY. Well — er — I'm not sure.

HECTOR. Or perhaps it was Miss Constantia you wanted to talk to?

CONSTANCE. No, please, Hector; you know how I hate publicity and all my pictures are at the theatre.

HECTOR. There are times, darling, when one must sacrifice oneself to the great hungry public.

HEGARTY. I am just looking for general information.

HECTOR. Well, we opened our season here nearly three weeks ago, and we have had the most — I won't say astonishing, because I have always believed that the public at heart — *au*

*fond*, as the French say — is quite sound and wants the best. Fine plays, well presented, mind you, and with suitable *décor*. I admit that our *décor* is not at present all it might be. You can understand, Mr. Hegarty, how the exigencies of continual touring —

HEGARTY (*light breaking on him*). Oh, you're actors?

HECTOR (*with exaggerated humility*). Well, I hope we are actors. Are we, Constance, my love?

LIZZIE. The De La Mare Repertory Company, Mr. Hegarty. (*To HECTOR*) Mr. Hegarty is from Dublin, and he's maybe a bit out of touch with things; you must forgive him.

HECTOR. I quite understand and there is nothing to forgive. We have not played Dublin for years. When were we there last, darling?

CONSTANCE. I really can't remember.

HEGARTY. What theatre did you play in?

HECTOR. One of the big ones, of course; I can't remember which.

HEGARTY. And you're doing well here?

HECTOR. We have been doing extraordinarily well — up to this week. Miss Twohig, can you explain the curious falling-off in the audiences this week?

LIZZIE. I can not. And I don't know why everyone this morning is asking me to explain everything.

HECTOR. I'm sure the repertory was varied enough — some new plays and some old favour-

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ites, but no one comes — at least only a handful. Things seem to be happening in the town all the time, and everybody is so busy talking about what has just happened or waiting for the next thing to happen to have any inclination or time to come to the Pavilion.

HEGARTY. Ah, so you've noticed it too?

HECTOR. Noticed what?

HEGARTY. The accumulation of incidents of a mildly criminal nature.

HECTOR. Oh, there have been many strange things which have not got into the papers.

HEGARTY. It's extraordinarily interesting.

CONSTANCE. It's extraordinarily distressing, Mr. Hegarty, when as a consequence we play to empty houses.

HECTOR. Never mind, dearest. We've learned to take the rough with the smooth.

CONSTANCE. We have. " 'Tis not in mortals to command success, but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it."

HECTOR (*chiming in*). " We'll deserve it."

HEGARTY. Bravo!

LIZZIE. I wish you could see some of their plays, Mr. Hegarty. They're gorgeous—though sometimes it's a bit hard to get to sleep after them. That one, Mr. de la Mare, where you throw the lamp at Miss Constantia and are then put in a strait-waistcoat — that was a very good one, but of course my favourite is where the baby is murdered in the cellar.

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HECTOR. Perhaps you will come to the theatre tonight, Mr. Hegarty. Any representative of the press is, of course, more than welcome.

HEGARTY. I am afraid I have to get back to Dublin.

HECTOR. Well, shall you be here for a little time?

HEGARTY. I think so. At any rate I'll be knocking around the town until the afternoon train.

HECTOR. I see. . . . I thought, Constance, we might stroll to the Pavilion and look for letters, and if we chanced to come on any photographs, Mr. Hegarty might like to have them. Just as a little souvenir, Mr. Hegarty; just as a little souvenir.

HEGARTY. Thank you very much.

HECTOR (*rising*). We won't be more than a few minutes. The Pavilion is just round the corner. Will you come, Constance?

CONSTANCE (*rising*). Yes, I should like a walk. I want to feel the sea-spray beating on my face.

LIZZIE. I'm afraid it's quite calm this morning, dear. The sun was trying to come out a little while ago.

CONSTANCE. What matter? I shall at least get a breath of ozone.

HECTOR. Shall I reserve your seat as usual, Miss Twohig?

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LIZZIE (*sadly*). No, I can't come tonight.

HECTOR. You've missed every night this week. Fie, fie!

LIZZIE. No one is sorrier than myself. But I don't like the way Eddie is going on at all and I want to keep an eye on him.

HECTOR. Dear, dear!

CONSTANCE. What's the matter with Eddie, Miss Twohig?

LIZZIE. Haven't you noticed him yourself? So dark and shut up in himself. And, worse than that, he's broken his pledge.

CONSTANCE. Oh, Miss Twohig!

LIZZIE. Yes, dear, never took a drop in his life till now. I feel quite frightened.

HECTOR. Where is he?

LIZZIE. I don't know. He's not around the house. I'm sorry, Mr. de la Mare, but I must stay at home tonight.

HECTOR. That's quite all right, Miss Twohig, quite all right. Constance, let us go.

*(They go out.)*

HEGARTY (*very keen*). Who is "Eddie", Miss Twohig?

LIZZIE. My brother's only child.

HEGARTY. And he's behaving queerly?

LIZZIE. He is indeed.

HEGARTY. I'd like to speak to him.

LIZZIE. He's out, as you heard me say; but indeed you'll get nothing from him. I'm the only one he speaks to — whenever he does speak

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— I'm the only one knows what's preying on his mind.

HEGARTY. And what is that?

LIZZIE. The old story, Mr. Hegarty, the old, old story — love's young dream, as Thomas Moore said long ago. . . . Are you married, Mr. Hegarty?

HEGARTY (*rather taken aback*). Why — yes.

LIZZIE. And happy?

HEGARTY. Very happy.

LIZZIE (*disappointed, but making the best of it*). Ah, you're one of the few lucky ones so. (*A tap at the door.*) Come in. (*Enter SLATTERY, furtive and poorly dressed.*) Oh, good-morning, Mr. Slattery.

SLATTERY. Good-morning, Miss Twohig.

LIZZIE. My brother is out, but can I do anything for you?

SLATTERY. You're just the one that can. (*From under his coat he produces a large tin.*) D'ye see that?

LIZZIE. I do.

SLATTERY. 'Tis a grand weed-killer you sold to Mick Tobin a few years back. I want one the like of it, and they told me below in the shop that it's you had the key of all the poisons.

LIZZIE (*taking tin and looking at it*). So I have . . . "Kill-em-Quick" — ah, Mr. Slattery, isn't it a pity, we're not allowed to stock that any longer; 'twas too poisonous altogether.

SLATTERY (*very dejected*). Is that so? Well,

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have you anything in the nature of rat-poison?

LIZZIE. I have, to be sure.

SLATTERY. Can I buy some?

LIZZIE. Lashin's of it. Wait till I get me keys.

HEGARTY. Just a minute; Mr. Slattery — pardon my butting in — but what do you want the weed-killer for?

SLATTERY. For me weeds.

LIZZIE. Of course.

HEGARTY. And, failing the weed-killer, you want rat-poison?

SLATTERY. For me rats.

LIZZIE. Of course.

HEGARTY. I see. . . . (*He takes up the tin and examines it thoughtfully.*) I imagine, Mr. Slattery, that you are very unhappily married.  
(SLATTERY *gapes.*)

LIZZIE. Sure the poor man's not married at all.

HEGARTY (*taken aback*). Oh!

LIZZIE. He lives with an old termagant of an aunt who is rotten with money and won't let him have more than sixpence a week in his pocket — pardon me for saying so, Mr. Slattery.

SLATTERY. It's no more than the truth.

HEGARTY. But you'll come into all her money when she dies?

SLATTERY. I suppose I will.

HEGARTY. Hm. Very interesting.

LIZZIE. I'll have me keys in a minute.



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SLATTERY (*trying to take back the tin*). Maybe I won't mind it today. I'll get a few penn'orth of sweets instead.

LIZZIE. No trouble at all.

HEGARTY (*holding on to the tin*). I think I'll keep this.

SLATTERY (*snatching it from him*). You will not.

*(Very rapidly and noiselessly he leaves the room.)*

LIZZIE (*turning; she hasn't seen him go*). I can't find — oh, he's gone! Isn't that very queer now?

HEGARTY. Very queer, Miss Twohig. I think I've put that two and two together anyhow. This may be a case for the police.

LIZZIE. The police? (*And immediately the door opens and MOONEY, a civic Guard, appears.*) Oh, heaven protect us!

MOONEY. 'Morning, Miss Twohig. Is your brother about?

LIZZIE. He's not.

MOONEY. Or the mistress?

LIZZIE. She's out too. Why do you want them? Can I do anything for you?

MOONEY. Well — I wanted to prepare them like.

LIZZIE. Prepare them?

MOONEY. Break the news, as you might say.

LIZZIE. Merciful heavens, what's happened?

MOONEY. It's Master Eddie.

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LIZZIE. Eddie! Eddie! He's dead?

MOONEY. No, no, miss. But he's terrible wet.

LIZZIE. Wet?

MOONEY. Yes, miss. He was in the sea.

LIZZIE. Bathing?

MOONEY. No miss. In his clothes.

LIZZIE. Is he after falling in? Poor little Eddie!

MOONEY. No one knows rightly how he got into the sea, miss.

LIZZIE. And who rescued him?

MOONEY. He rescued himself, miss. It seems he got out of the sea at the White Rocks. Maybe he fell in, or maybe he — no matter. Anyway, he walked out of the sea himself, and then he hid among the rocks because he was ashamed-like to walk through the town dripping wet; but a lad came on him and brought him back, and he's having a sup of whiskey at Breen's, so I thought I'd just come ahead and give you all the bend.

LIZZIE. I'm sure it's very kind of you, Tom. Oh, I wish Annie was here, or Helena — I haven't seen her all the morning either. I'd better get a cup of tea for him, anyway.

MOONEY. Don't bother about the tea, miss. Put him to bed the minute he comes in.

LIZZIE. Yes, that's a good idea.

MOONEY. And have a couple of hot-water bottles ready.

LIZZIE. Yes.

MOONEY. And give him two aspirins.

LIZZIE. Two? Yes.

MOONEY. And tell the master I'll be back in a little while as soon as Master Eddie is dried off. I'm afraid there'll be a few questions I'll have to put to him.

LIZZIE (*fussing about the room*). What an upset it all is — poor Eddie — aspirin and hot-water bottles — where are my keys? Tom, do you see my keys anywhere?

MOONEY (*starting to look*). What class of keys?

LIZZIE. Oh, just a bunch of keys. Oh, Eddie, Eddie! Mr. Hegarty, for goodness' sake have a look round for a bunch of keys. (*They all start looking.*) The kettle's sure to be off the boil — 'twould be bound to happen. If Helena was here itself —

MOONEY. I have them here, miss, here on the writing-table.

LIZZIE (*taking them*). Thank you, Tom. I won't be two minutes now.

(*She goes out.*)

HEGARTY. Is there any statement you'd like to make?

MOONEY. About what?

HEGARTY. Master Eddie.

MOONEY. Who the divil are you?

HEGARTY. I write for the papers, and —

MOONEY. Ah, go to blazes.

HEGARTY. There is nothing you want to say?

MOONEY. There is not.

HEGARTY. I see. It's a pity. It might have got your name before the public.

MOONEY. I don't want my name before the public. I want to live quiet. Here, out with you.

HEGARTY. Before I go I have a statement to make in connection with poisons.

MOONEY. I won't hear it. I'm bothered out of my life with people coming to me with statements about attempted murders and suicides and God-knows-what. I'll hear no more of them.

(CHRISTINE comes in, in evident distress.)

CHRISTINE. Is Eddie —? Oh, I beg your pardon.

MOONEY. That's all right, Miss Lambert. (To HEGARTY) Out of this, you.

HEGARTY. But really —

MOONEY. No more talk. (*He pushes him out*). Master Eddie's as right as rain and will be here in a minute.

CHRISTINE. They told me at the factory he was drowned.

MOONEY. Wisha, bad luck to them for story-tellers.

CHRISTINE. Then in the street they said he had only got a ducking.

MOONEY. Let you sit down. You're all of a tremble.

CHRISTINE. Thank you, Mr. Mooney.

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MOONEY (*moving to the door*). I'll see that they send Eddie home; he should get out of his wet clothes and not be drinking at Breen's. (*He hesitates; he comes back to her.*) Miss Lambert, if you'll excuse the intrusion, we've all a great respect for John Twohig and the family and I'd be sorry anything to happen Eddie.

CHRISTINE. Happen Eddie? But he's safe, isn't he?

MOONEY. He is in one way, and he isn't in another. It'll be my business, I'm afraid, to find out what brought him into the water today, and, begging your pardon, it'll be a little bit your business too.

CHRISTINE (*getting up indignantly*). I had nothing to do with it. What do you mean? What are you accusing me of?

MOONEY (*soothingly*). Now, there's no use flying out at me. I'm too old, and I'm married; that makes me patient. Everyone in town knows you and Master Eddie, everyone likes the two of you; and that's a sweet little place John has outside the town.

CHRISTINE. I don't know it.

MOONEY. 'Tis well you know it. The last time you were down here, didn't I see you and Eddie walking the land? Good land and a smart, tidy little garden all going to waste because John's too busy to live out there. A doaty little house — a woman living out there

would be crowned. However, I won't go into all that. I'll just hint that, under certain circumstances, I might overlook any charges I might have to bring against the young gentleman in question. I think I hear him coming. (*He goes to the door and looks out.*) Come in here, Eddie, for a minute before you go to your room. There's someone wants to see you.

EDDIE (*heard off*). Who is it?

MOONEY. 'Tis Miss Lambert.

EDDIE (*heard off*). No, no, I can't come in.

MOONEY (*going outside the door*). In with you and no nonsense. (*There is a bit of a scuffle outside and MOONEY shoots in EDDIE. EDDIE looks very woebegone; he has no hat and his hair is tousled and wet. Someone has lent him an overcoat, old and too big for him. Below it are seen two wet, flannel-trousered legs.*) Here he is for you, Miss Lambert.

CHRISTINE (*rushing to him*). Eddie, darling!

MOONEY. Exactly.

(*He goes softly out.*)

CHRISTINE. My darling, what happened to you?

EDDIE (*rather sniffy*). Let me go, Christine. I'm not — I want to change, I'm dripping.

CHRISTINE. I know, darling. But what happened?

EDDIE. Oh, nothing.

CHRISTINE. Nothing? Nonsense. What did you do?

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EDDIE (*glibly*). Well, I was on a rock and I got giddy and I fell into the sea.

CHRISTINE. That may be a good enough story to tell round the town but it's not good enough for me. (*Softly*) Won't you tell me, Eddie?

EDDIE (*sniffing*). I was so miserable, Christine.

CHRISTINE. I know, darling.

EDDIE. It didn't seem worth going on with.

CHRISTINE. I know.

EDDIE. And there seemed no hope things would ever come right.

CHRISTINE. Yes, darling.

EDDIE. So — so I tried to make an end of it all.

CHRISTINE. My poor darling.

EDDIE. I'm no good at living, Christine.

CHRISTINE. Hush, hush.

EDDIE. But if I'm no good at living, I'm as bad at dying, for the minute I felt the cold of the water I wanted to get out of it quick and go on living, and unfortunately I'm an awfully strong swimmer so — so I just swam ashore and — and that's all.

CHRISTINE. Darling!

EDDIE. Wasn't I the fool to try and destroy myself by drowning? I should have tried any other way but that.

CHRISTINE. Darling! . . . Eddie, do you know I've called you "darling" about a dozen

times in the last two minutes?

EDDIE (*quite dumb*). Have you, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Yes, darling.

EDDIE. Well?

CHRISTINE. Oh, you donkey!

EDDIE. You don't mean —? Oh, Christine!

CHRISTINE (*in his arms*). Of course I mean. If you'd been drowned, Eddie, I'd have been the next off that rock, and I can't swim.

(ANNIE appears; she is in outdoor clothes; she takes in the situation at a glance.)

ANNIE (*a little stern*). Hm! Upstairs with you, Eddie, and get out of your wet things.

EDDIE. Yes, Mammy. But Christine says she'll —

ANNIE. I think I know quite well what Christine says, but off with you. Do you want to get your death of cold?

EDDIE. No, Mammy. Very well, Mammy. I won't be five minutes changing, Christine.

ANNIE. You'll have a hot bath and you'll go to bed. Your Aunt Lizzie has everything ready for you.

EDDIE. Very well, Mammy. But I'm not going to bed.

(*He dashes out.*)

ANNIE (*softening*). I had to hunt him, Miss Lambert. I don't want him down on our hands with pneumonia.

CHRISTINE. Do you mind, Mrs. Twohig?

ANNIE. Mind?



CHRISTINE. Eddie and me ——?

ANNIE. Sure, my dear, it's what I've been wanting ever since I set eyes on you. Eddie's foolish in some ways and a bit young, but he's as good as gold and I know you'll make a fine man of him.

CHRISTINE. Eddie's splendid, Mrs. Twohig, splendid.

ANNIE. We'll talk it all out by and by. I've a lot of things on my mind this morning. You'll stay, won't you? It's not worth going back to the factory before the dinner.

CHRISTINE. Yes, I'll stay. I'll just run upstairs and tidy myself. I rushed out of the factory without so much as a hat — and I think I've been crying.

ANNIE. Well, off with you. (*CHRISTINE goes out. ANNIE goes to the door and calls.*) Helena! Helena! Bad luck to that girl; there's no getting any good out of her these days.

*(She goes out. There is a little pause.*

*JOHN comes in, pushing PETER in front of him. JOHN looks very stern, PETER very frightened and small. JOHN locks the door.)*

JOHN. Tell it to me again. I want to know are me ears mad or what.

PETER (*in a tiny voice*). Well, 'twas an all-night sitting, as you know, and the late Minister for Agriculture made a terrible powerful speech and ——

JOHN. To hell with the late Minister for Agriculture. Why did you listen to him?

PETER. I couldn't sort of help it. He made a terrible powerful speech and ——

JOHN. And you let yourself be swayed by a bit of mob oratory?

PETER. It was not mob oratory, John, it was not. It was facts and figures and ——

JOHN. Facts and figures! What the hell business have you with facts and figures? Your business is to vote with the Government.

PETER. I know. But ——

JOHN. But?

PETER. It was that play, *An Enemy of the People* — do you remember it, John? I couldn't get it out of my head.

JOHN. Oh, those bloody plays!

PETER. Do you remember when the doctor in the play said that nobody should act so that he'd have to spit in his own face? I felt I sort of had to tell the truth, and the only way I could tell the truth — I'm no speechifier — was by my vote.

JOHN. So you voted against the Government?

PETER. I did.

JOHN. And defeated the bill?

PETER. Yes.

JOHN. And now the Government has to go to the country?

PETER. I suppose so.

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JOHN. Suppose so? Don't you know? And don't you know that this place is disgraced for ever in the eyes of the world? Why, thunder and turf, man, what's going to become of public life at all if members of Parliament start being swayed this way and that by speeches and arguments, facts and figures, moryah? There's an end to all stability in public affairs; nobody will know where they stand; no party will know from day to day whether it has a majority or not; it's chaos, man, pure chaos.

PETER. I know, I know. I'll never do it again.

JOHN. You'll never have the chance to do it again, me bucko. Do you think you're going to be candidate at the next election?

PETER. I suppose I won't.

JOHN. I know you won't.

PETER. It was that play — *An Enemy of the People* —

JOHN. "An Enemy of the People!" Faith, that's you; that's your name from this out.

PETER. I nearly cried in the car coming down — I got a lift as far as Shangarry Strand and I kem on by bus. I'm afraid to face the wife, though she herself was mad about that same play.

JOHN. Ah, don't talk to me about those plays, they have been the ruination of this place. However, thanks to Annie, I have already made up my mind how to deal with them.

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*(He goes to the door and unlocks it.)* You'd better be off home, Peter, and get it over. We'll be friends again one of these days, but for the next week for God's sake keep out of my sight.

PETER *(meekly)*. Very well, John.

*(He goes out.)*

JOHN *(calling from the door)*. Annie! Annie!

ANNIE *(heard off)*. Yes, John.

JOHN. Come here. *(ANNIE comes in.)* It's even worse than you thought.

ANNIE. What is?

JOHN. That play business. Peter Hurley's put out the Government on the head of some blasted play.

ANNIE. In heaven's name! That's awful, John.

JOHN. 'Tis a national tragedy — and to think that we're to blame for it all. Are they upstairs? Fetch them down. The sooner the whole thing is settled the better.

ANNIE. I think they're just after coming in from the Pavilion. I'll get them.

JOHN. Do so. And, Annie, come back yourself. You'll be a great help in case they turn nasty.

ANNIE. Very well. There's one thing, John. Eddie had a little accident this morning; he got a wetting. Say nothing to him about it, and if you hear any gossip in the town pay no heed to it.

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JOHN. What do you mean? What's all this about?

ANNIE. Nothing at all. Pay no heed to anything but what I tell you. All's turned out for the best, and Eddie's going to marry Miss Lambert.

JOHN. The devil he is! Well, I'm delighted. Me bold Eddie!

ANNIE. I knew you would be. I'll go call Mr. de la Mare.

*(She goes out. JOHN sits at the writing-table, takes out a cheque-book and writes a cheque. HECTOR and CONSTANCE come in; HECTOR has a large envelope in his hand. ANNIE follows them.)*

HECTOR. You wanted to see us, Mr. Twohig?

JOHN. I did. Will you sit down. *(The three sit. JOHN stands.)* It's a bit hard for me to say what I have to say. Maybe I'd better begin by giving you this.

*(He hands him the cheque.)*

HECTOR *(looking at it)*. Fifty pounds? What is this for?

JOHN. Maybe you don't remember that it was in our agreement that the contract at the Pavilion could be terminated on either side without notice on payment of fifty pounds?

HECTOR. Oh. . . . But — I do not understand. I admit that the audiences this week

have been a disappointment, a sore disappointment, but I am confident that they will improve as the week goes on.

CONSTANCE. Miss Joyce bought three seats while we were there just now.

JOHN. It's got nothing to do with the audiences.

HECTOR. You can't have any complaint about the acting, I'm sure.

JOHN. I've nothing against the acting — 'tis very good.

ANNIE. Too good.

HECTOR. Or the conduct of the company?

JOHN. No. Decent people, every one of them.

HECTOR. Then, I repeat, I do not understand.

JOHN. Well, it's this way. Queer things have started to happen here, things that never happened in fifty years, and it was Annie who put her finger on the root of the trouble.

CONSTANCE. What sort of things do you refer to, Mr. Twohig?

JOHN. You know very well, Miss Constantia. Nasty things that were getting Inish into the paper.

CONSTANCE. And what have we to do with such things?

JOHN. Annie, maybe you could explain better than I can.

ANNIE. In a word, it's all you and your plays,

Mr. de la Mare; and mind, I'm not saying a word against you personally or Miss Constantia either, but maybe they're too good for the like of us or we're too simple for them. I remember saying the morning you came — God forgive me — that we were blue-mouldy here for want of a good scandal or two; well, it seems there were lots of scandalous things going on in the town that no one knew anything of except the parties concerned. We were all more or less happy and comfortable, good-tempered and jolly — until these plays began to put ideas into our heads. We got suspicious of our neighbours and of our own families. The young people got asking themselves, "Is life worth living?" If I've heard that question asked once in the last week I've heard it asked a dozen times. My own boy asked it of me! Sure never before did we think of asking ourselves such a ridiculous question.

HECTOR. It is far from ridiculous, Mrs. Twohig. *Is it worth living?* I often wonder.

ANNIE. Ah, don't talk nonsense, man. Of course it is.

CONSTANCE. You have faith, Mrs. Twohig.

ANNIE. I have my religion, Miss Constantia. Did you ever see a big stone in a field, Mr. de la Mare?

HECTOR. Of course I did.

ANNIE. You might be sitting by it, idle-like, some sunny afternoon, and then for no reason

at all you'd turn it over. And what would you see? Worms. Little beetles that'd run this way and that, horrible little creepies that'd make your stomach turn, and you'd put the stone back as quick as you could, or you'd run away.

HECTOR. I see, I see! A splendid simile, Mrs. Twohig. We have lifted the stone, we have exposed Inish. Constance, it's wonderful. We have a mission here, a great duty.

JOHN. Oh no, sir, you haven't. Your duty is to get yourself and your traps out of the hall as quick as you can. Annie and myself saw the Monsignor early this morning and he agrees with the course I'm taking.

ANNIE. He agrees that there must be a stop put to people going into suicide pacts on the head of "Is life worth living?"

CONSTANCE. What nonsense. It shows great moral courage.

ANNIE. Whining and running away? A thing we never did before in Ireland.

HECTOR. You know you really can't turn us out like this at a moment's notice.

JOHN. The agreement says I can, and things is so desperate that I have to stick by that agreement even if it seems a bit hard on you. Do you know that we'd have a murder on our consciences only by the good luck that McCluskey the butcher is such a bad shot with a hatchet?

CONSTANCE. I don't believe that had anything to do with our plays.



JOHN. And Tommy McCluskey in the front row every night? Of course, we all knew he fought now and again with Julia, but the night he threw the hatchet was the night he came home after seeing Mr. de la Mare throw the lamp at you.

HECTOR. But there are quite a number of seats booked for tonight, Mr. Twohig. Are you going to disappoint those people?

JOHN (*with a confident smile*). They'll get their money's worth.

HECTOR. In what way?

JOHN. I was on the 'phone this morning to Shangarry Strand. I'm having the circus over.

HECTOR (*really pained*). A circus?

JOHN. It's on the road now. It will be in the town any minute.

CONSTANCE (*outraged*). This is an insult, a deliberate insult.

JOHN. It's nothing of the kind.

CONSTANCE. You are a narrow, bigoted man; you are afraid of the truth, and your wife is worse; she is an ignorant provincial. She has only seen our work twice —

ANNIE. Twice was enough.

CONSTANCE. We were giving you great art. I have played here as I have never played before. Mr. de la Mare has given himself — all of himself — night after night to an audience of — clodhoppers. And now, when we stir something in these clods, waken them to some spark

of life, you say they must go to sleep again, and you rock them to sleep with a circus! It's an insult to them and to us.

ANNIE. I don't know what you mean by awakening them to life, Miss Constantia. It seems to me you were awakening them to kill each other or themselves, and to say mean, slanderous things of each other and ——

JOHN. And to put out the Government. Oh, when I think of that Peter Hurley ——!

ANNIE. The long and the short of it is, you were doing no good here and you must be gone.

HECTOR. You really mean this?

JOHN. I do.

HECTOR. I can only say that I am sorry. I think you are mistaken — tragically mistaken — in your attitude, but you have treated us fairly all along and I am not going to stoop to a sordid quarrel. (*He puts the cheque in his pocket.*) My wife has said some things she should not have said, but I know that you will forgive her.

ANNIE. Of course. Sure, dear, I'm sorry for you.

CONSTANCE (*sitting down and crying a little*). We were so happy here; you were all so kind to us, I thought we were fixed for the whole summer. I'm so tired of dragging from place to place.

ANNIE (*going to her with lovely sympathy*). I know, dear, I know. But you mustn't think of going away, not until you've settled where

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT

you can go. This is your home for as long as you care to stay. Isn't that so, John?

JOHN. To be sure it is. I'll take it badly if you go away in a huff.

CONSTANCE (*sniffing*). Thank you, Mrs. Twohig.

ANNIE. Ah, sure, call me Annie.

HECTOR. I appreciate your attitude, Mrs. Twohig, and I am very grateful for your offer of hospitality. We shall probably avail ourselves of it for a few days. I think it will be only for a few days, because our success here has had reverberations elsewhere and I have at least two very good offers in my pocket.

JOHN. I'm more than delighted to hear that.

HECTOR. Let us go to the Pavilion, darling, and start to pack.

CONSTANCE (*rising*). Very well.

(*As they reach the door* CONSTANCE *whispers something to* HECTOR.)

HECTOR. Oh, yes. . . . Mrs. Twohig, if that young newspaper man comes back you might give him this envelope; it contains some photographs he particularly asked for.

ANNIE (*taking the envelope*). Certainly.

HECTOR (*to* JOHN). And keep a couple of seats for us tonight, please; it's twenty years since I've seen a circus.

(*They go out.*)

JOHN. Well, that's over. They took it very nicely.

III            IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

ANNIE. They did, the creatures.

JOHN (*crossing to the sideboard*). I think I deserve a little drink after that.

ANNIE. You do, to be sure.

JOHN. You ought to make a cup of tea for yourself.

ANNIE. I'll have a glass of port instead.

JOHN (*astonished*). Annie, what's come to you?

ANNIE. I don't know, but I feel so light in the heart, as if a big cloud was gone.

JOHN. Faith, you're welcome to a bucket of port, but here's a wineglassful to begin with.

(*As he is pouring it out, HELENA comes in; she is in outdoor clothes.*)

ANNIE. Helena, where were you? I was looking everywhere for you.

HELENA. I know, ma'am. I was at the chapel, ma'am.

ANNIE. And what were you doing at the chapel this hour of the morning?

HELENA. I was getting married, ma'am.

ANNIE. Merciful heaven! Who to?

HELENA. Michael, of course. Who else?

ANNIE. Oh, my poor girl, is this what has come of all that nasty talk? Why didn't you tell me? I'd have told you not to mind a thing they said and not to tie yourself up for life with a man who's no more to you than the next.

HELENA. It's not that way at all, ma'am. Michael and me have been promised to each other for the last two months, only I never

could bring myself to tell him about — you know what. I was delighted it slipped out of me that morning. Anyway, to stop tongues wagging, we thought we might as well be married at once.

JOHN. Well, thunder and turf! That's one good thing the plays did, anyhow. Where's Michael?

HELENA. Outside the door, listening. (*Raising her voice.*) You can come in, Michael, they're not mad at all.

(MICHAEL comes in, a little sheepish.)

JOHN. Oh, there's the bold bridegroom! Hold up your head, Michael. Here, put the hand there and I wish you the best of luck.

MICHAEL. Thank you, sir.

ANNIE. And I wish you the same, and the best of luck to you, Helena, and years of happiness.

HELENA. Thank you, ma'am, you've always been the good friend to me.

(LIZZIE hurries in.)

LIZZIE. A band, John, a band!

ANNIE. Where?

LIZZIE. Coming up the street, I think. I heard it from the upper window.

JOHN (*coolly*). Did you ever hear of a circus without a band?

LIZZIE.

HELENA.

MICHAEL.

} A circus?

JOHN. In the Pavilion tonight, and free seats for all the town.

*(Music is heard.)*

HELENA. Glory!

MICHAEL. I hear the band myself. Come out to the door, Helena.

*(He and HELENA rush out.)*

LIZZIE. And look, there's the sun bursting out.

ANNIE. My heart's lepping with joy.

*(It is quite true, the room is flooded with sunshine. CHRISTINE and EDDIE rush in and make for the window. EDDIE is dressed in his nicest suit.)*

EDDIE. A band, Pappy, a band!

CHRISTINE. Eddie, am I mad or do I see a clown?

LIZZIE *(crowding to the window)*. A clown? Clowns are my joy.

EDDIE *(with a shout)*. Two clowns!

CHRISTINE *(topping him)*. Three!

LIZZIE. And a doaty little girl in spangles on a piebald pony. John, what's the meaning of it all?

JOHN. We've put back the old stone, Lizzie, thank God.

ANNIE. Amen.

LIZZIE. I don't know what you mean. Anyhow, it sounds grand.

*(The music has swelled nearer. The band is playing "Stars and Stripes for Ever".*

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ACT III

EDDIE *and* CHRISTINE *can't resist it, they must do a little dance together in the background.* LIZZIE, *staring out of the window, is softly clapping her hands and smiling.* JOHN *and* ANNIE *are near the front.*)

JOHN. Annie, get on the telephone to Dublin.

ANNIE. Why so?

JOHN. Get on to the best shop in the city. I think I owe you a new dress.

ANNIE. Maybe you do. . . . Have you got six coppers?

*(He fumbles for them. The music fills the room. The Curtain falls.)*

THE END

BIRD'S NEST

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS







FOR  
GEORGE YEATS



*Bird's Nest* was first produced on September 12, 1938, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, with the following cast :

JOSEPH FEHILY . . . . .	F. J. McCormick
JOSEPHINE . . . . .	Shelah Richards
PHILIP . . . . .	Austin Meldon
BOB . . . . .	Patrick Carey
HYACINTH . . . . .	Cyril Cusack
DOLLIE SCHOFIELD . . . . .	Ria Mooney
CORNELIUS SCHOFIELD . . . . .	Fred Johnson
MATTHEW FOX . . . . .	Denis O'Dea
STANISLAUS O'GRADY . . . . .	Arthur Shields
MICKEY ROCHE . . . . .	Michael Kinsella
CHARLIE DALY . . . . .	Malachi Keegan

The play was produced by Hugh Hunt.

## CHARACTERS

JOSEPH FEHILY.

JOSEPHINE }  
PHILIP } *his Children.*  
BOB }  
HYACINTH }

DOLLIE SCHOFIELD, *his Sister-in-law.*

CORNELIUS SCHOFIELD, *his Brother-in-law.*

MATTHEW FOX.

STANISLAUS O'GRADY.

MICKEY ROCHE.

CHARLIE DALY.

The acts take place in the Fehilys' dining-room at Inish. An hour elapses between Acts I and II, and twenty-four hours between Acts II and III.

## ACT I

*The dining-room in the FEHILYS' house at Inish. A plainly furnished room, shabby furniture. There is a radio. The grate is empty. A window at the back showing blue sky and perhaps the sea. PHILIP and BOB FEHILY are sitting at the dining-room table studying. PHILIP is eighteen, BOB seventeen. HYACINTH, aged fifteen, is sitting at a small table, also studying. PHILIP and HYACINTH wear spectacles. BOB is sing-songing a lesson of some sort.*

PHILIP. Oh, shut up.

HYACINTH (*after a silence*). How much is nine times ——?

PHILIP. Shut up.

(*Silence.*)

BOB. I say, Phil ——

PHILIP. Oh, for the love of Mike ——

(*He puts his hands over his ears. DOLLIE SCHOFIELD, their aunt, puts her head round the door. She is middle-aged and plain.*)

DOLLIE. Any sign of Stanislaus?

PHILIP. How could there be? The bus isn't due for another hour.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

DOLLIE. Dear, deary me. Your Pap will be raging.

PHILIP. Can't be helped.

DOLLIE. Why on earth would he choose the bus. Telegraphing and all and the train cheaper than the bus and more secure-like, and able to read and all and to put the feet up — that's if the carriage is empty — and loosen the shoes if a corn is preying on you and — oh! —

*(She breaks off as JOSEPH FEHILY, her brother-in-law, enters. He is a worried-looking man of over fifty. He wears a shabby, baggy suit; he looks dyspeptic and not very clean.)*

JOSEPH. No telegram?

DOLLIE. No, Joseph. Not a sign of one, except the one from Stan.

JOSEPH. Away off, Dollie, and wet the tea.

DOLLIE. Yes, Joseph, certainly. Are you not waiting for Stan?

JOSEPH. Certainly not. I'm sick telling you — tea at six, no earlier, no later.

DOLLIE. Yes, Joseph. When Stan's telegram came I was certain it would be from the College in Dublin to say Josie had passed her exam, flying colours and all —

JOSEPH. Well, it wasn't.

DOLLIE. No, indeed. Only from poor little Stan.

JOSEPH. Little? Six feet if he's an inch.

DOLLIE. Ah. I saw him in his cradle, Joseph. He'll always be little to me.

JOSEPH. Away off and wet the tea.

DOLLIE. Yes, Joseph. I made a cake for the tea against little Stan coming.

JOSEPH. Good.

DOLLIE. Somehow it wouldn't rise.

JOSEPH. What matter.

DOLLIE. And in the end it got burnt. I wonder why. I don't think those gas machines are the things at all. Mother in the old days——

JOSEPH. Away ——

DOLLIE. I threw it to the hens in the end, but even they wouldn't cock an eye at it.

JOSEPH. Away off and ——

DOLLIE. Wet the tea. Yes, Joseph. I know.

*(She goes. All this time the boys have been studiously working. JOSEPH, standing with his back to the fireplace, eyes them with satisfaction. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes six. Instantly the boys raise their heads.)*

PHILIP. } Can we smoke, Pap?  
BOB. }

JOSEPH. You can.

*(Out come cigarettes.)*

HYACINTH *(timidly)*. Can I have a —— a —— ?

JOSEPH. You know well you can't. At your age! You can have drops.

HYACINTH. I'm sick of drops.

JOSEPH. Nonsense. All boys are fond of



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

drops. Look, I bought you an ounce at Brady's.  
(*He gives him a small paper bag.*)

HYACINTH. Thank you, Pap. Maybe you'd have one yourself?

JOSEPH. I daren't. Not with me stomach rumbling the way it is.

PHILIP. What has happened Stanislaus to come on the bus, Pap?

JOSEPH. How should I know? Just a bit of his usual flightiness. I'm glad he'll be only here a day or two. He's a bad example to you.

PHILIP. Yes, Pap. I don't hold with Stanislaus.

JOSEPH. I'm glad you don't.

HYACINTH. I like him. He brought me a compass the last time.

JOSEPH. Much good that was.

HYACINTH. Well, you'd always know where the North Pole would be.

JOSEPH. And what advantage would that be to you?

HYACINTH. And this time he's promised me a ship in a bottle.

JOSEPH. A ship in a bottle! — Pst! (*To the other boys*) How's the work going, lads?

PHILIP. Oh, all right, I suppose.

JOSEPH. Has the Master been?

PHILIP. Yes. Straight after school. He left ten minutes ago.

JOSEPH. Then he left ten minutes before his time. What ailed him to renague?

BOB. He was taking the wife rowing.

JOSEPH. Bad scran to him and his rowing. I'm paying him to instruct yees and off he goes rowing. I'll row him?

PHILIP. He said he'd give us an extra ten minutes tomorrow.

JOSEPH. He'd better.

BOB. I hate him. Cabbage.

JOSEPH. Cabbage? What do you mean?

BOB. Cabbage-water. Stale cabbage-water. He smells of that.

JOSEPH. What matter?

BOB. Couldn't we do without him, Pap?

JOSEPH. You know well you could not. He knows his job well, and 'tis he and he only will pull you through your exams.

HYACINTH. Pap, couldn't we have a boat this summer the way we had long ago?

JOSEPH. The idea! What would yous be wanting a boat for?

HYACINTH. To go rowing and fishing in, the same as the other boys.

JOSEPH. The same as the young rowdies in Inish?

HYACINTH. I don't think they're so terrible rowdy. It's grand to see the way Billy Mick can sail a boat and ——

JOSEPH. I won't have you consorting with Billy Mick and his like. Remember you're a cut above him.

HYACINTH. Yes, Pap. I've only spoken to

him once and he — he sort of jeered me.

JOSEPH. Jeered you! The impertinence.

HYACINTH. Yes, Pap. But I'd like to go rowing. (*He gets up tiredly.*) Could I open the window, Pap? It's awfully stuffy in here. (*Excitedly.*) There's a schooner rounding the point! I think it might be the *Tom Crowley*. Could we run down and see her come in to the quay?

JOSEPH. Your aunt will be having your tea for you in a minute.

HYACINTH. Jimmy Farley will be on her. They've been to Cardiff to fetch coal. Cardiff — that's Wales. Were you ever in Wales, Pap?

JOSEPH. No. Never outside the four walls of Ireland.

HYACINTH. It's right across the Irish Sea. You'd be out of sight of land — maybe for days and days.

JOSEPH. We'll go walking after tea. I feel the need of air myself. We'll walk from seven to eight and then be back for the studies. No, we'll get back at half-past seven, there's going to be a very educational lecture from Radio Eireann on the round towers of Ireland.

HYACINTH. Yes. . . . If we don't go to the quay maybe we'd go to the White Rocks. As like as not Eddie Twohig and the other lads will be swimming there.

JOSEPH. We'll not go near the White Rocks.

Straight out to the new County Hospital and straight back. There's a nice gravelled path all the way.

HYACINTH. Yes. . . . I'd sooner go rowing. Billy Mick would lend me his boat, maybe.

JOSEPH. Billy Mick! No more talk about that lad. Sure what's his father? A licensed bookie, and in a very small way.

HYACINTH (*staring out of the window*). There's so little wind, all her sails are set. I'd always like a schooner better than an old ketch. Wouldn't you agree with me, Pap?

JOSEPH. Maybe I'll hire you a boat in August or September — that's if you're good lads and pass your examinations.

PHILIP. Sure my examination's not till October.

JOSEPH. That's true. No boating for you, Phil, this summer. But wait till next year when you're a clerk in a bank, boating and fishing, and tennising in white trousers.

PHILIP. Sure, I've never played tennis.

JOSEPH. Yerra, couldn't you learn? You're smart at the books, you should be smart at the tennis.

PHILIP (*lifting his head with his thick goggly glasses*). Me eyes are crooked.

JOSEPH. What matter? . . . You're sure of the exam, aren't you?

PHILIP. You ask me the same question every day of the week.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. Why wouldn't I? What does the master say?

PHILIP. The usual old guff.

JOSEPH. What do you mean?

PHILIP. Ask him yourself.

JOSEPH. You're very thorny, Phil. Are you sick?

PHILIP. Me tots are awful.

JOSEPH. Your what?

PHILIP. Me long tots.

JOSEPH. You're just hungry for your tea, son dear. Your Aunt Dollie will have it for you in a jiffy.

PHILIP. I'm not hungry. Sure I'm never hungry.

JOSEPH. Isn't Matt Fox after sailing into the National Bank and I'm told his long tots were a fright?

PHILIP. I only wish I was Matt Fox and through all this and away.

(BOB starts to sing an amorous song.)

JOSEPH. Stop that.

BOB. Why so?

JOSEPH. It sounds dreadful low and vulgar. Where did you learn it?

BOB. Don't you remember? It's the theme song from *Lulu of Honolulu*.

JOSEPH. Oh, that was a terrible lewd picture. The Monsignor is right, them movies are detrimental to faith and morals. I think from now on we'll cut out that weekly night at the Pavilion.

PHILIP. }  
BOB. } Cut out the pictures!

JOSEPH. I'll talk to the master about it, maybe he'd arrange something else, recitations or the like. You could learn off some good classical recitations and speak them out to your aunt, your sister and myself. That would be grand and educational-like. What's keeping Dollie? Wash your hands, boys, before the tea.

ALL. Yes, Pap.

(JOSEPH goes out.)

BOB. Do you think he meant that about the pictures?

PHILIP. He did for the minute but Josie will talk him round. . . . Isn't she very quiet, not excited or anything? If I was waiting on a telegram to know if I'd failed or passed I'd — I'd be pacing the house. I'd slip down to the Seaview and buy myself a bottle of stout.

BOB. Where'd you get the money?

HYACINTH (*still at the window*). They're lowering the mainsail now.

PHILIP. What mainsail?

HYACINTH. The *Tom Crowley's*.

BOB. The Pavilion! Sure, it's the only bit of life we have. Wasn't the girl last week grand?

PHILIP. The fat blonde?

BOB. Well, she was a bit — a bit —

PHILIP. Fat. Fat as an old sow.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

BOB. She was a peach ! And, boy, what a kisser !

(PHILIP makes a disgusted noise.)

BOB. Well, what's wrong with kissing?

PHILIP. Slop.

BOB. Slop, nothing. I like 'em fat. I'd like to have my arms round a real big fat girl. Did j'ever kiss a girl, Phil? Real kissing, I mean.

PHILIP (*with a look at HYACINTH*). Shut up.

BOB. Oh, Hyacinth's not that innocent. Are you, Hyacinth?

HYACINTH (*innocently*). No, Bob.

BOB. I bet you're not. I bet it's not for nothing you go out with Maggie feeding the hens. I bet you kiss her in the hen-house an odd time.

HYACINTH. No, Bob.

BOB. Then who d'you kiss? Out with it, me young rake.

HYACINTH. I kiss Mrs. Bulmer — at least she kisses me.

BOB. Mrs. Bulmer! That old dame! Why, she's seventy if she's a day.

HYACINTH. She's seventy-two. She told me so herself. She knew mother, she held her in her arms when she died. "Take the baby," mother said, "take the baby." That was me. I love Mrs. Bulmer.

BOB (*laughing*). Listen to him, Phil.

PHILIP. Let him alone. I'm sick of your talk all the time about girls and kissing.

(*A big knock at the hall door is heard.*)

HYACINTH. It's Stan!

PHILIP. Couldn't be.

BOB. The buses are often late but never before their time.

HYACINTH. I wonder has he remembered to bring me the ship in a bottle.

PHILIP (*listening at the door*). Aunt Dollie has opened the door, she's sort of exclaiming.

BOB. She'll be late with the tea and Pap will be picking at her. Maybe with luck and Stan coming we'll do no more studying tonight.

PHILIP. Pap will see that we do. Anyhow I want to study, I want to get that exam. I want to get out of Inish. I want to be in a bank the same as Matt Fox.

(DOLLIE *appears pushing* CORNELIUS SCHOFFIELD *in front of her. He is between fifty and sixty; a fine sturdy man.*)

DOLLIE (*all in a flutter*). Come in here — the boys are here — of all the things — when the knock came I made up my mind it was Josie's telegram — and then you on the doorstep — such a start you gave me — years and years — why ever didn't you write?

CON. I was never much of a hand for writing letters, Dollie.

DOLLIE. That's true indeed. (*The boys are staring at him.*) But even a postcard, or a Christmas card at Christmas, and you in foreign parts and all, gorgeous scenery and black men and —



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

PHILIP. Why, it's Uncle Con!

CON. Uncle Con it is. You've got it in one. You've shot up. Quite a young man.

DOLLIE. It's seven — eight long years.

CON. You're Phil?

DOLLIE. Yes, and that's Bob and there's little Hyacinth.

CON. He wasn't much more than a babby when I saw him last.

DOLLIE. He's as thin as a jack-snipe, he's growing too fast, but he's as bright as a button.

HYACINTH (*coming forward with his hand out*). How-do-you-do, Uncle Con. I remember you.

CON (*presenting his left hand*). How are you, boy?

*(There is a moment of fumbling and awkwardness.)*

DOLLIE (*with a scream*). Your arm, Con! God in heaven, what's happened your arm?

CON. A bit of machinery. Amputated in Liverpool three months ago. Nothing to talk about.

DOLLIE. Nothing to talk about! What would your sister Nora say?

CON. Nora'd laugh and say, "Just like Con! to mislay an arm, careless fellow."

DOLLIE. But buttoning your clothes, and shaking hands —

PHILIP. And filling a pipe.

BOB. And shaving.

CON. Forget it. Sure, what's an arm more or less?

DOLLIE. A sailor without an arm! My deary me.

HYACINTH. You couldn't be pulling ropes.

CON. Thank God I haven't pulled a rope in twenty years. It's been the engine-room for me.

HYACINTH. The engine-room! I always pictured you, Uncle Con, up aloft shortening sail in a hurricane, or in the crow's-nest; lashed to the helm an odd time and the sleet frozen to your beard ——

CON. I never could grow a beard.

HYACINTH. Rounding the Horn and doubling the Cape and singing chanties ——

CON. They'd throw me overboard if I started to try to sing.

*(JOSEPH comes in. He and CON stare at each other.)*

CON. Hello, Joe.

JOSEPH. Con, by the powers!

DOLLIE *(hysterically)*. He's lost an arm, Joseph; he's lost an arm, he's lost an arm!

JOSEPH. Nonsense. How could he lose an arm?

DOLLIE. He has. Look at his sleeve — flapping.

JOSEPH. Flapping? Rubbish.

CON. Mislaid it, Joe; just mislaid it. Bit of carelessness — I always was careless, as you must well remember. Dollie generally gets

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

things wrong but she's right this time. Arm gone, sea gone, profession gone.

JOSEPH. That's terrible, Con, terrible.

CON. Not at all. Home now to end my days in Inish.

JOSEPH. Home? Here? Inish?

CON (*sitting down*). Wandering Willie's return. Prodigal son. Bad wicked uncle. Roving sea-dog. Heavy drinker. Bad character. Evil influence.

JOSEPH (*uncomfortable*). I see.

DOLLIE. There's the little room, Con ———

JOSEPH. The house is very full with the lads growing up.

DOLLIE. There's the little room, and, for your sister Nora's sake ———

JOSEPH. My daughter Josephine's quite the young lady.

DOLLIE. She'll maybe be out of this in a week or two, Joseph, if she gets the scholarship, and anyway there's the little room ———

JOSEPH. I have to keep the boys steady to their books.

HYACINTH. You'd tell us about the sea!

DOLLIE. There's the little ———

CON. Shut your trap, Dollie. And quiet yourself, Joe. I'm not coming to live on you. Put me up for a week or two and I'll be grateful. I'm neither one thing nor the other. I'm not the romantic old rascal of an uncle who turns out to have bags of money and sets his relations

up for life — nor am I a sponger either. The company have pensioned me decently and given me a lump sum of money in my fist — my left fist. I'm going to buy a little place here and settle down.

JOSEPH. Oh . . . I see. That's fine. But why would the company give you money?

CON. Gallantry, Joe, just gallantry. That was the word the Directors used. We won't go into details. Forget it.

JOSEPH. I see. . . . Will you forgive me, Con, if I seemed not to make you very welcome?

CON. It's forgotten. You're the same old skin, Joe. Respectable.

JOSEPH. I have to think of my position.

CON. Still Town Clerk?

JOSEPH. Yes. And the insurance and the shipping agencies.

CON (*a little ironically*). Town Clerk in Inish! It's a great responsibility.

JOSEPH. It is. And getting the boys into the world. That lad there — Philip — he's going for a banker.

CON. He is?

JOSEPH. And the second boy, Bob, for the Civil Service.

CON. Big notions. And the youngster?

HYACINTH. I'm only for the Intermediate, Uncle Con. And I'll never be for banks or the like of that —

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. We'll see, we'll see.

HYACINTH (*a little wildly*). I won't, Pap, I won't. I'd die first.

JOSEPH. We'll see, son, we'll see.

CON. A touch of his wild uncle. . . . Are all their eyes astray?

JOSEPH. Not at all. Short-sighted a bit; sure everyone is nowadays.

CON. And my niece — I forget her name — yes — Josephine?

DOLLIE. A lovely girl, Con, the image of darling Nora.

CON. My sister was a grand woman. The best of the three of us. A real lady.

DOLLIE. She was. Not like me, Con. I was always the plain one.

CON. What matter. You were always a decent old skin, Dollie.

DOLLIE. Thank you, Con. Will I call Josie, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Do, and be wetting the tea; or is it wet already?

DOLLIE (*going*). It is not, Joseph, but I'll have it ready in no time.

CON. And for the love of Mike tell the lovely Josephine about my arm; I want no more explanations and blow-offs.

DOLLIE. Yes, Con.

(*She goes.*)

JOSEPH. Josie's a clever girl, Con; I think the world of her.

CON. I remember her now; she was crazed about music, the same as Nora was.

JOSEPH. Oh, she gave that up years ago. She's all for science now. She's up for a travelling scholarship in chemistry. It'll mean two years in Vienna or some such place and a big appointment after.

CON. That sounds great.

JOSEPH. We expect news of it any minute, they're to telegraph. I'm on pins and needles. . . . Will you stop gaping at your uncle, lads. Off with you and wash your hands.

PHILIP. Yes, Pap.

*(The three of them go.)*

JOSEPH. It's a wonder you wouldn't write and tell us of your accident, Con. It's ages since we seen you. Of course we were never very great together.

CON. Our natures were different.

JOSEPH. You know, the years seem to have passed lightly over you.

CON. I suppose they have. I was never much hand with a pen, and when I had free time between voyages somehow I never felt like Inish — 'twould have been different if Nora hadn't died.

JOSEPH. But you feel like Inish now?

CON. I do. It's queer. When voyaging was over for ever my mind turned back here. If I could buy a small house and settle down —

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. And a bit of garden. Old sailors are apt to be great gardeners — because I suppose the strangest thing in the world to them is a blade of grass.

CON. I'm afraid I'm not likely to do much gardening.

JOSEPH. I forgot. Your pardon.

CON. I keep forgetting the old arm myself. . . . You've aged, Joe.

JOSEPH. The stomach comes against me terrible, and we're a bit poor and pinched. Dollie's no sort of a manager — reckless — but sure I had to give her a home. And eudcating the children — it's pay, pay, pay all the time.

CON. I suppose so. Well, I'm sure they'll do you credit and pay you back in their turn.

JOSEPH. I don't expect it from them. They'll have their own lives to make. But they're good steady boys; they'll live to be a credit to their mother.

CON. She was a grand woman.

JOSEPH. I never knew how she could bring herself to stoop to marry me.

CON. Nor did I.

JOSEPH. Thank you, Con.

CON. Don't mention it. Pleasure.

*(JOSIE comes in. She is twenty-two or twenty-three. A charming, intelligent young woman, simply dressed but in perfect taste. She hurries to CON, flings her arms round his neck and kisses him.)*

JOSIE. Uncle Con!

CON. Well, well! And is this little Josie? Such a grown-up young woman. God, Dollie was right, you're the dead spit of your poor mother.

JOSIE. I wish that was true. I'll never forget her, she was lovely. . . . It's grand to see you again. And is it a fact what Aunt Dollie says — that you're going to settle down here in Inish?

CON. That's my intention.

JOSIE. Splendid!

JOSEPH. For all you're likely to see of Inish!

JOSIE (*her face falling*). I forgot.

CON. You like the place?

JOSIE. Why wouldn't I? It's home.

JOSEPH. No word yet? No telegram? It's a wonder the result wouldn't be out before this.

JOSIE. And no Stanislaus.

JOSEPH. The bus isn't due till near seven.

CON. Stanislaus? Who's he? Your best boy?

JOSIE. Gracious, no. Stanislaus O'Grady. Mother's first cousin's son. *Your* first cousin's son.

CON. I remember his father. A wastrel. I never knew the son.

JOSEPH. Both the parents are dead; he's the only one left, a crazy ne'er-do-well — from East Cork.

JOSIE. Maybe he's a bit crazy, but he's



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

a dear. He doesn't care a scrap about — about —

*(She stops.)*

CON. About what?

JOSIE *(a little bitterly)*. Oh, about all the things in life that really matter, Uncle Con — examinations and getting on and posts and appointments.

JOSEPH. Sure we must all be going for something.

JOSIE. Of course.

CON. And what does he go for?

JOSIE. Ask him when you see him. He'll be here within an hour.

*(DOLLIE comes in.)*

DOLLIE. The tea is ready.

JOSEPH. In the long run.

DOLLIE. I'm sorry, Joseph. But with Con coming, and little Stan expected — the boys are sitting down.

JOSEPH. Will you come, Con? We eat in the kitchen; it saves carrying dishes to and fro and leaves this room free for the lads and their studies.

CON. Right you are. After you, Josie.

JOSIE. Go ahead. I dropped into the Sea-view and Annie Twohig gave me tea. And I'm waiting here for Matt.

CON. Matt?

JOSIE. My best boy. Yes, I really have one, Uncle Con.

## BIRD'S NEST

JOSEPH (*a little solemnly*). His father's the big auctioneer here. He's just passed into the Bank. He and Josie are engaged to each other.

CON. I see. Well, I'd say he had good taste.

JOSIE. Get along with you.

(CON and JOSEPH go out.)

DOLLIE. Oh, it's terrible, terrible.

JOSIE. What's terrible?

DOLLIE. His arm, his arm, his poor arm. You didn't mention it?

JOSIE. Not after you warned me.

DOLLIE. I couldn't sit down at tea with him; I couldn't see the way he'd try to butter his bread; it would turn my stomach.

JOSIE. He seems cheery enough.

DOLLIE. He was always gay and wild. It nearly broke father's heart when he ran off to be a common sailor. None of us Schofields ever stooped as low as that. If he'd stayed at home, he'd have come in for the land and the house.

JOSIE. Both of them mortgaged up to the hilt.

DOLLIE. What matter? There had been Schofields at Springfield for a hundred years and more. And now the house is bare and empty and the land sold to a stranger from Carlow.

JOSIE. It's wonderful, Uncle Con coming back to live here! "Home is the sailor, home

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

from the sea, and the hunter home from the hill."

DOLLIE. He never was a hunter — maybe he'd go out snaring rabbits an odd time. But my father had his gun and there was never a winter he wasn't asked to go shooting cock with the Manserghes.

JOSIE (*lightly*). Yes, we have come down in the world.

DOLLIE. I'm saying no word against your father, mind.

JOSIE. I know you're not, Aunt Dollie.

DOLLIE. As decent a man as ever walked — but no match for a Schofield.

JOSIE. Mother didn't think so.

DOLLIE. No, crazed about him. And to think she could have married Bobby Mansergh.

JOSIE. Well, look at the same Bobby Mansergh. The stupidest — why, he's almost illiterate.

DOLLIE. What matter. Look at the place he has and the position in the county.

*(A knock is heard.)*

JOSIE. That will be Matt.

*(She is going to the door.)*

DOLLIE. Don't trouble, I'll let him in. I must go back to the kitchen and see is the tea all right. I'll have to keep my eyes off Con.

*(She goes. JOSIE tidies the room a little; she looks a little troubled. A minute or so later MATT FOX comes in. He is*

*quite a presentable young man, but very ordinary.)*

MATT (*coming in quickly*). Josie, is it true?

JOSIE. Is what true?

MATT. That your uncle is home for good and all and without an arm? All Inish is talking of it.

JOSIE. It's quite true.

MATT. Where is he?

JOSIE. At tea with the boys and father.

MATT. What's he like?

JOSIE. Much the same as ever. A nice rough-haired Irish terrier.

MATT. Rough?

JOSIE. You never knew him?

MATT. Saw him once I think, donkey's years ago.

JOSIE. I always loved him — so did mother, though they were so different. He was for wandering away and she was for stopping here.

MATT. Didn't he become just a common sailor?

JOSIE. He got his master's certificate, but he never rose very high. Still, he had the roaming life he wanted.

MATT. I'm a roamer myself.

JOSIE. You, Matt? You, the most settled thing?

MATT. I heard from the bank people this evening.

JOSIE. Yes?

BIRD'S NEST

ACT

MATT. By the evening post. They're sending me to Westport.

JOSIE. Westport?

MATT. Right away in Connemara. Oh, won't it be grand living in the West? I don't know the town, but anything will be better than this stick-in-the-mud Inish.

JOSIE. I suppose so.

MATT. I've felt so stifled here. And I won't be so badly off, for father's promised to add a bit to my salary, and if I work steadily and get promoted we can marry in a year or two.

JOSIE. And live in Westport always?

MATT. Not Westport always. I'll get moves. What's wrong with Westport, anyway?

JOSIE. Nothing. I don't know it.

MATT. Well?

JOSIE. I've my career too.

MATT. I don't believe you'll ever get that scholarship. Just wait on here, it will be only a couple of years. Maybe you'll get a small job in the meantime — you could give lessons or something — some little thing that would keep you independent.

JOSIE. I've got it.

MATT. Good egg. What sort of a job?

JOSIE. I mean — *it*. Vienna.

MATT. Vienna!

JOSIE. I had a telegram. I've got the scholarship.

MATT. What!

JOSIE. Yes. Two years in Vienna and then some pretty important post.

MATT. Gosh, Josie, that's marvellous. I never thought you'd a chance.

JOSIE. Thanks, Matt. . . . Nor did I, as a matter of fact.

MATT. Your father must be hitting the sky.

JOSIE. He doesn't know.

MATT. What!

JOSIE. I haven't told him yet.

MATT. It's a wonder Miss Flynn at the post-office didn't bell out the news.

JOSIE. The telegram was a code-word a girl in Dublin sent me. It wouldn't mean a thing to Maisie Flynn. I happened to meet the telegraph boy in the street an hour ago and took the wire from him.

MATT. It's great, great! Josie, what a chance!

JOSIE. Yes, isn't it?

MATT. You don't seem a bit delighted.

JOSIE. I suppose I should be, but I'm not. I've been thinking — thinking hard ever since I got that wire. If it wasn't for poor Father and all he's spent on me . . . Matt, aren't we a pair of fools?

MATT. How, fools?

JOSIE. Your father has a good auctioneer's business; there's no one to step into his shoes now that your brother Paddy has gone to Maynooth. When your father dies, the business

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

must be sold. Why shouldn't you . . . ?

MATT. You'd want me to be an auctioneer in a little one-horse town like Inish? No thanks.

JOSIE. Isn't it as good as being a bank clerk in Westport? We could marry tomorrow and settle here for ever.

MATT. And be for ever meeting people like the Twohigs and the Brosnans and the O'Sullivans and ——

JOSIE. Yes. Meeting all the people we've known since we were children and who have known us. And we know about the mad cousin, and the priest in Liverpool, and the sister who's so well married in Pittsburgh ——

MATT. What mad cousin? What sister in Pittsburgh?

JOSIE. I mean everyone; everyone here in Inish. And if we put a shilling on a race we put it on with Billy Mick's father. And Maisie Flynn, God bless her heart, reads our postcards and knows our news before we do. And we spot every new dress Annie Twohig buys, and we know how many fish were landed in the morning and the price Tom Crowley is giving for oats, and that Dr. Cross is drinking again ——

MATT (*dumb*). That's not true, he's not.

JOSIE (*impatiently*). I know he's not. I'm only saying things. Springfield House is in the market, your father is auctioning it next week.

MATT. Well, and if he is?

JOSIE. You'd get it for a song. Buy it, and marry me.

MATT. And settle in Inish?

JOSIE. Why not?

MATT. But the bank — I told you I was going to Westport.

JOSIE. You'd never think of Springfield? It's a nice old house, mother was born there and her father and grandfather before her.

MATT. An old-fashioned old place.

JOSIE. We could do it up. It's only a mile and a half from the town. We could have a car.

MATT. To drive to Inish!

JOSIE. Cork's not so far off. I thought you wanted to marry me, Matt.

MATT. I do, Josie, you know well I do. I've wanted it for the last I don't know how many years. But to spend my life in Inish!

JOSIE. Even with me?

MATT. You're putting me in the wrong; making out I'm thinking only of myself.

JOSIE. I didn't mean to, Matt. I can see your point of view. . . . So I suppose it's Vienna for me.

MATT. It won't be two years before we can get married — maybe sooner if the governor does the decent.

*(JOSIE looks at him for an instant and turns away with a little negative gesture.)*



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

MATT. Josie! Do you mean you won't marry me? Don't you care for me any more?

JOSIE. Matt!

*(Quickly, impulsively they kiss.)*

JOSIE. Oh, if we weren't so different!

MATT. But, Josie, darling —

*(He breaks off, for all the others come in.)*

JOSIE. You weren't long at your tea, Pap.

JOSEPH. Con had no appetite and I had to hurry the lads — Dollie and the tea being so late. We want to do a bit of walking and be back in good time for the wireless and the studies.

DOLLIE. And it looks like rain, Joseph.

JOSIE. Uncle Con, this is Matt Fox.

CON. How are you? Excuse the wrong hand.

MATT. How do you do.

CON. I hear you're engaged to my niece.

*(MATT hesitates to answer.)*

DOLLIE. He is, Con, he is. They're cracked about each other.

CON. You'll have to look after her well.

JOSEPH. Get your caps, boys. No telegram yet, Josie?

JOSIE. Yes. I got a telegram. The result's out.

JOSEPH. You've heard, Josie?

JOSIE. I've got it, Pap, I've won it. I've — captured Vienna.

JOSEPH *(speechless for an instant)*. My dear, darling child. *(He kisses her.)*

## BIRD'S NEST

JOSIE. Dear old Pap.

ALL THE BOYS. She's got it! She's got it!

*(Delight. Kissing. Congratulations.)*

DOLLIE *(kissing her)*. God bless you, child.  
It's all you, Joseph; it's all thanks to you.

JOSEPH. Ah, nonsense. . . . If your mother  
could have lived to see this day.

PHILIP *(singing)*. Good-bye to Inish.

BOB. Farewell Market Square.

HYACINTH. The anchor's weighed. Hoist  
the mainsail!

PHILIP. Up, Vienna!

*(JOSIE is crying a little on her father's  
shoulder. CON watches the scene silently.  
Gradually everything fades to silence and  
HYACINTH steals back to the window and  
looks out.)*

HYACINTH. I'd like to go rowing.

*(But no one takes any notice.)*

CURTAIN

## ACT II

*The same scene. An hour later. CON is sitting, smoking. STANISLAUS O'GRADY is poking the fire. STAN is twenty-five, dressed in a nice rough tweed suit. He looks a pleasant fellow.*

JOSIE (*coming in. She stops in astonishment*).  
Stan! What in the name of goodness are you doing?

STAN. Trying to get this fire going.

JOSIE. A fire in June! It's unheard of in this house.

STAN. Why not? It's raining hard, and I got perished in the old bus. I found kippeens in the yard and a mouthful of coal. Your uncle agreed with me that a fire would be the very thing.

CON. I did, Josie. Sailors ashore are always chilly.

JOSIE (*laughing*). You're a caution, the pair of you. I don't know what Father will say.

STAN. Ah, sure he knows I'm hopeless. He gave me up years ago. When did you say he'd be back?

JOSIE. He and the boys went for a walk — to the County Home and back; they're not due for a bit unless the rain drives them home.

(HYACINTH *appears.*) Oh, it has. You're back?

HYACINTH (*going quickly to STAN*). Stan!

STAN. Hallo, youngster.

HYACINTH (*wringing his hand*). It's grand to see you.

STAN. You've grown. You're quite a young man.

HYACINTH. It's a year — a whole year since I've seen you.

JOSIE. Where are the others?

HYACINTH. I don't know. I told a bit of a lie, Josie; I said my shoes were leaking. They're not; at least not much, but Pap let me turn back. I felt in my bones Stan had come. Oh, it's grand, grand.

CON. What's grand?

HYACINTH. Stan being here and you, Uncle Con — and — Jiminy! a fire!

JOSIE. Isn't it disgraceful, Hyacinth? It's all Stan's doing.

STAN. Aided and abetted by your Uncle Con.

HYACINTH. It's lovely. I love things queer and unnatural. Uncle Con without an arm and you going to Vienna.

JOSIE. That's a back-handed compliment.

HYACINTH. Josie, you know I didn't mean it that way. It's — it's — it's just not the rut. To be going away — to be going across half Europe! You'll have to cross the sea twice, Josie.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSIE. And amn't I the worst sailor in the world? I can't face a row-boat in Inish and the sea as flat as a pan of milk.

HYACINTH. Ah, what matter, when you think of what's the other side. Not that I'd want to bury myself in the heart of Europe. . . .  
(To STAN) What was Dublin like?

STAN. Fine. I went to a theatre or a picture every day for a week. I heard Gigli, I saw Garbo; I met a few good fellows in the hotel; I never hit my bed till two in the morning or later.

HYACINTH. I suppose you never thought of — I suppose you forgot?

STAN (*teasing him*). Forgot? Forgot what? I never remember anything for five minutes. I can't even boil an egg.

HYACINTH. You promised — in your last letter —

STAN. Forgotten.

HYACINTH. Ah well, it can't be helped. Sure you couldn't be expected to remember a little thing like that. And anyway, it's grand to have you here.

STAN. It's in my bag.

HYACINTH. I don't believe you. You're only teasing.

STAN. Truth.

HYACINTH. In a bottle?

STAN. In a bottle. I'll get it. Put some more coal on the fire, Josie. We may as well

be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

*(He goes out.)*

CON. A nice fellow, Josie.

JOSIE. A dear. But as father says, crazy.

HYACINTH. He's not crazy, he's grand, grand. I wish he'd stay here for ever and ever. I'm going to help him unpack his bag.

*(He rushes out.)*

CON. And that's a nice kid, Josie.

JOSIE. Hyacinth's a pet.

*(DOLLIE comes in.)*

DOLLIE. It's starting to stream rain and — my goodness gracious, a fire!

JOSIE. Stan's doing, Aunt Dollie.

DOLLIE. I wouldn't doubt little Stan. Still, your father will be raging. I wonder did he take his coat with him; they'll all come back dripping, dripping. . . . I was looking out your mother's old trunk; you'll want it going to Vienna.

JOSIE. Don't bother. I've a couple of suitcases.

DOLLIE. Your mother's has worn a bit shabby; it never got over the time those mice nested in it, but it was a good trunk in its day, and I don't think much of those rubbishy modern suitcases. Brown paper, sure that's all they are. . . . Are you sure you had enough tea, Con?

CON. Plenty, Dollie. Why did you have none yourself?

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

DOLLIE. I'm just after having a cup in my hand.

JOSIE. I've a letter to write, I'll get it over before Stan comes back. I know he'll keep us up to midnight with his talk and I'll get nothing done.

*(She goes out.)*

DOLLIE *(sitting comfortably by the fire)*. It's grand to have you back, Con. I feel I want to talk to you for hours and days and I don't know where to begin.

CON. It's good to see you again, Dollie, but the years have been a bit hard on you, I think.

DOLLIE. I was never a raving beauty, Con. Maybe they have been hard years, but I've not felt them passing. I've always been kept busy minding the house for Joseph and the children.

CON. You've not had much of a life.

DOLLIE. Maybe. It broke my heart when Nora died. What could I do but try to step into her shoes and look after her children? I know Joseph hasn't much opinion of me as a manager, but I'm not as flahoola as he thinks.

CON. I bet you're not. . . . This place is a big change after Springfield.

DOLLIE. I had to sell it to pay off the mortgage. Selling it went to my heart. I never pass the avenue gate if I can help it, or if I do have to pass, I shut my eyes.

CON. Nora loved it too. How ever could

she exchange it for this mean house — and Joseph!

DOLLIE. Love is a contrary thing, Con. He worshipped the ground she walked on and she felt the same about him. You never liked Joseph; he and you are like oil and water; and I cried my eyes out the day she told me she was going to marry him; but in all these years I've come to know him and I respect him more every day.

CON. Oh, I suppose he's decent.

DOLLIE. He's more than that. I don't think there's a more unselfish man living. He hasn't bought a suit of clothes for himself in four years.

CON. Nor a dress for yourself, I expect.

DOLLIE. I don't matter. I don't go about much; I've very few friends. The people who were glad to know me when I lived at Springfield dropped me when I came here. What matter? I have my pride, and maybe they're right. Sometimes I feel I've got a bit common; I catch myself saying things I've never said long ago — not in Father's house.

CON. Living with Joseph!

DOLLIE. Maybe so. But look at him! Every penny he earns goes to the children. He's educating them to be worthy of their mother.

CON. What are they like?

DOLLIE. Good boys the three of them — and ambitious. And look at Josie — isn't she a



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

lovely girl? And clever. This scholarship in Vienna is a big thing.

CON. But how does that fit in with the Matthew man? Isn't she booked to marry him?

DOLLIE. The marriage couldn't anyway be for a long time yet. And he's not her match. An auctioneer's son! I'm hoping Vienna will put him out of her head. Maybe she'll marry some grand Austrian; a count or something; someone more her equal.

CON (*laughing*). You always had high notions for the family.

DOLLIE. Why wouldn't I? The Schofields of Springfield!

CON. Well, one of those same Schofields went for a common sailor.

DOLLIE. Yes. You were a sore disappointment, Con.

CON. I had the life I wanted.

DOLLIE. And, please God, the boys will have the life they want.

CON. The two eldest will be gone in a couple of months I gather — and Josie. You'll be lonely.

DOLLIE. It's wings, Con, wings.

CON. How wings?

DOLLIE. It's like fluttering — I hear it round the house — the young birds leaving the nest. It has to be, God grant them happiness. It's the way life is.

CON. Well, you'll have Hyacinth for a few years more.

DOLLIE (*evasively*). Yes. . . . You'll think me wild and foolish, Con, but if you're serious about settling down in Inish why wouldn't you buy Springfield?

CON. Buy Springfield?

DOLLIE. The house isn't so big — you must remember it as well as myself, and the land is all sold. I believe you'd get it for a song.

CON. Damn it, it's something to think of. . . . Would you come and live with me there?

DOLLIE. I'd give the world and all to be back there again, but I couldn't leave poor Joseph. With the boys spreading their wings he'll be getting very lonely, and he's given me a home all these years.

CON. I bet he got good value out of you — a housekeeper for the price of your keep.

DOLLIE. We'll quarrel, Con, if you keep on running down Joseph. If he was good enough for Nora, he should be good enough for you and me.

CON. I'll keep my trap shut. You're a loyal old thing, Dollie.

(*Joseph comes in.*)

DOLLIE. Oh, you're back. Are you drenched?

JOSEPH. No. I had my coat.

DOLLIE. Are the boys changing their shoes?

JOSEPH. No.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

DOLLIE. They must. They'll get their deaths.

*(She rises.)*

JOSEPH. I left them in at the Pavilion.

DOLLIE. At the pictures! And 'twas only this evening at tea you were so hot against the pictures.

JOSEPH *(a little shamefaced)*. I know. But sure with Stanislaus here and Con back I knew there'd be no studying tonight, and the lads are working hard; they don't get much diversion, and the pictures might chance to be educational-like.

DOLLIE. Hm! The last educational film in Inish emptied the Pavilion. John Twohig won't try another in a hurry.

JOSEPH. What in the name of — ? A fire!

DOLLIE. A weeshy fire little Stan put down.

JOSEPH. I wouldn't doubt him. A fire in June!

DOLLIE. I wasn't here when he did it, Joseph, or I'd have made my protest. But I'm sure he was perished. Wasn't he, Con?

CON. Frozen stiff. Put half the blame on me, Joseph.

JOSEPH. Coal is gone mad.

DOLLIE. I know. But it's only for the one evening, and isn't it lovely, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Oh, it's lovely to see money flying up the chimney.

DOLLIE. Well, it's lit now and it can't be

outed. Come close to it, Joseph; I'm sure you're perished after your walk.

JOSEPH. I'm not perished, I'm in a glow. Where's Stanislaus?

DOLLIE. Upstairs unpacking his bag with Hyacinth. Here they are.

(STAN *and* HYACINTH *come in.* HYACINTH *has a ship in a bottle in his hand.*)

STAN (*shaking hands*). Hallo, Joseph.

JOSEPH. How are you?

HYACINTH (*showing ship*). Look, Pap; look, Uncle Con. He brought it for me; he didn't forget.

CON. Fine.

HYACINTH. It has four masts. And look at the teeny tug towing her. Look, Pap.

JOSEPH. I see. Very neat. It's kind of you to remember the child, Stan.

HYACINTH. Are you good at bottling ships, Uncle Con?

CON. Don't know. Never tried.

HYACINTH. I thought all sailors bottled ships.

CON. Not at all. Only lighthouse men.

HYACINTH. Oh. . . . I wouldn't like to be a lighthouse man, always stuck on the same old rock and the little birds killing themselves against the windows. . . . (*Looking at the ship.*)

What'll we call her, Stan?

STAN. The *Good Hope*.

HYACINTH. The *Good Hope* — that's a

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

lovely name. If we could only launch her and break a bottle of wine across her bows —

DOLLIE. We'll do it; there's a bottle of ginger beer left over since Christmas.

HYACINTH. It must be wine, Aunt Dollie; there's not much hope in ginger beer.

CON. You talk like an old salt.

HYACINTH. Do I?

JOSEPH. Enough of that nonsense. . . . How are things with you, Stan? How's the farm doing?

STAN (*vaguely*). The farm?

JOSEPH. They've had good weather for the hay round here. Have you yours saved?

STAN. Didn't I write and tell you? I sold all the land last autumn.

JOSEPH. } Sold the land!  
DOLLIE. }

STAN. I couldn't be bothered with it.

JOSEPH. Bothered with eighty good acres? Are you mad?

STAN. I kept the house and an acre of garden.

(*JOSIE comes back, her letter in her hand.*)

JOSEPH. { He's sold his farm!  
DOLLIE. { He's sold his farm, he's sold his  
          { farm, he's sold his lovely farm!

JOSIE. What?

STAN. Yes, Josie. Thanks be, I'm as free as air now.

JOSIE. Stan, you're a caution. Did you get a good price?

STAN. I don't know. I'm told I did.

JOSIE. And where are you living?

STAN. Oh, I kept the little house and garden.

JOSEPH. And what are you working at?

STAN. My days are full. If it's a wet morning, I lie in bed reading till the sky clears; if it's a fine day, I'll be up with the sun walking the mountains, or down to the river throwing a line for a trout.

JOSEPH. And you call that a full day?

STAN. Oh, I'll be up half the night reading; and then there's the wireless. I spent a lot of money on a first-class set and I have all Europe at my feet.

DOLLIE. But surely you miss the land you were born and reared on?

STAN. I was never meant for a farmer, Dollie. I kept the right of turbary and I've cut a lot of turf already — I always liked cutting turf. I've the garden full of nice vegetables and roses — no dirty old potatoes — I get them and milk from the neighbours. I don't eat meat once a fortnight. I'm as contented as a pet bird.

HYACINTH. It sounds awful shut-in and lonely.

STAN. Not at all. I have an old woman to come in and clean up twice a week, and if I want to talk I can walk two miles down to the village of an evening and have a few pints with the boys. But I don't go down once in a week

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

except maybe to the school-house for the books from the county library — they've a great selection. I'm busy learning French and German, and now I can follow nearly everything they say on the wireless.

JOSEPH. It's shameful, shameful. A useless, idle life; a fine farm thrown away. What would become of the country if everyone carried on like that?

STAN. Sure, they won't. The man who bought my land is plodding on it day and night. He's like a bit of the ground himself — clay and cow-dung from boot to oxters. He has the life he wants, so have I. He's happy and I'm happy and what else matters? I've enough to live on and I can afford a week in Dublin now and again — maybe I'll manage London next year. They talk of the loneliness of the country — I'm never bored for an hour of the day.

DOLLIE. It doesn't sound right at all, it's — it's sort of un-Christian.

STAN. Oh, I attend to my duties all right, Dollie; and didn't I sing at Father Mulcahy's concert in the school-house?

CON. You're a card!

STAN. I am not — just natural. Doing what I want to do and to hell with what the others think.

JOSIE. It sounds a good life to me.

STAN. Good girl, Josie, that's just what I

was hoping. For it was on my mind to ask you to come back with me.

JOSIE. Back with you? How do you mean?

STAN. I was thinking you might as well marry me.

(JOSIE just stares at him.)

JOSEPH. Marry you? The idea!

DOLLIE. Such a way to ask her!

JOSEPH. I'd have you know she's pledged to Matthew Fox, whose father's the big auctioneer and himself going into a bank.

DOLLIE. No wooing or love-making or a thing!

JOSIE (*laughing*). You're a caution, Stan. You're a nice fellow and I like you and always have, but I'm not going to marry you.

STAN. Well, that's a pity. I think you're making a mistake. I thought we'd be likely to get on grandly together.

JOSIE. And you wouldn't need to have the old woman in twice a week.

STAN. I was thinking that too. You see we do think the same way, Josie.

JOSIE. And I could help you with the turf — carry the creel on my back.

STAN (*a little pained*). I wasn't just wanting to get a servant, Josie.

JOSIE. I know that, Stan, and I beg your pardon. But put the idea of me out of your head.



## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. My daughter with a creel on her back! And she off to Vienna.

STAN. So she told me, but I didn't see that need make any difference. She could give up Vienna.

HYACINTH. Give up Vienna!

DOLLIE. Dukes and archdukes!

STAN. Sure, she could listen in to Vienna. I tell you all the capitals of Europe are mine for the turn of a knob.

JOSEPH. I don't know where you got your wild strain from.

CON. The Schofields, Joseph.

STAN. Wild? Sure, I'm leading the quietest life in the world. Come back with me, Joseph, as Josie won't have a bit of a rest. You look worn out.

JOSEPH. Ah, nonsense. What about the boys and their studies?

DOLLIE. I'd keep them to it.

JOSEPH. You! Thank you, Stan, but I'm not going and no more about it. I'd go crazy.

STAN. I'm sorry, Joseph. If you could only bring yourself to relax.

JOSEPH. Relax! Hm!

JOSIE. Well, I'll be off to post this before I forget it.

STAN (*getting up*). I'll be with you, Josie.

HYACINTH (*jumping up*). And may I come, Stan?

DOLLIE. You may not.

HYACINTH. Why not, Aunt Dollie?

DOLLIE. Can't you see —? Ah, sure you're only a child.

JOSIE (*laughing*). Let him come, Aunt Dollie. Stan's done his courting. I don't think he's going to begin again in the main street of Inish.

STAN. I am not.

JOSIE. Come on, so.

*(The three go out.)*

CON. He's an oddity.

JOSEPH. Dangerous, wild ideas. No stability. The making of communists and free-thinkers.

DOLLIE. Indeed Stan's none of those dreadful things, Joseph, and you've no right to suggest them. I saw him in his cradle.

JOSEPH. I wish he was away home; he's a bad influence on the lads.

CON. Queer, his giving up so much at his age and I starting to collect at mine.

DOLLIE. Collect? How do you mean?

CON. I mean sailors don't have things — they can't. Now when I get a house I'll have to start getting things and I look forward to it. All I have in the world is in two big boxes, an attaché-case and a bank-book.

DOLLIE. I forgot about your things. Where are they, Con?

CON. I left the boxes at the station; the attaché-case is in the hall, the bank-book in my pocket.

BIRD'S NEST

ACT

DOLLIE. It's time I showed you the little room, and maybe you'd give me a hand to make the bed. Maggie — the girl — is away at Confession.

*(Going towards the door.)*

CON *(following her)*. Don't bother about the bed, Dollie. I'll make it myself.

DOLLIE. I must get sheets; the blankets are on it already.

*(Before they get to the door there is a knock on the hall door.)*

DOLLIE. Are you expecting anyone, Joseph?

JOSEPH. I don't think so.

*(DOLLIE and CON go out, leaving the door open. A little murmur of conversation is heard. Then DOLLIE, off stage.)*

DOLLIE. He's inside in the room. *(She appears.)* Mickey Roche to see you.

*(She ushers in MICKEY ROCHE, seventeen or eighteen years old but must be long-legged. She goes out, closing the door.)*

MICKEY. 'Tis me, sir.

JOSEPH. I'm done with you.

MICKEY. Yes, sir.

JOSEPH. I've nothing more to say to you.

MICKEY. Yes, sir. . . . Only two pounds, sir.

JOSEPH. As I told you, it's not worth two fiddlesticks.

MICKEY. Since I was speaking to you, sir, I dug out the old bell.

JOSEPH. Ah sure, what's a bell.

MICKEY. A bike without a bell is a death-trap sir, and it rings grand. 'Twill enchant Hyacinth.

JOSEPH. Do you think if I bought your old bike I'd let him ride it without a bell? Thank God I have the half-crown in the pocket to buy him a new one.

MICKEY. Ah, the bells that's going now aren't the thing at all, sir. Shoddy. This one belonged to my Uncle Jer, who was killed in the crossness.

JOSEPH. As rusty as bedamned.

MICKEY. No, indeed, sir. A bit of sand-paper and as bright as the dawn. And I'd buy a little pot of black enamel and the frame would look as good as new.

JOSEPH. Away with you.

MICKEY. Yes, sir. . . . I'll take two bob off the price, sir.

JOSEPH. Away.

MICKEY. The tyres are grand. Sure I've hardly ridden it; the time I got fever and was away in the hospital me legs grew out of all knowledge. When I came out, if I threw a leg across a saddle it'd be trailing the ground.

JOSEPH. Sure the whole outfit's a mask of rust.

MICKEY. You wouldn't say that, sir, if you could see it now. I sat up half the night polishing it. It goes to me heart to part from it.

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. I don't believe that about your legs. I believe it's an old crock and you're going to put the few shillings I give you on a grand new machine for yourself.

MICKEY. Indeed no, sir, I'm through with bikes and the dull old roads around Inish. I've a chance job on a trawler, sir.

JOSEPH. What would you want on a trawler?

MICKEY. Fishes, sir, and to be going hither and over.

JOSEPH (*taking two notes, a pound and a ten-shilling one, out of his pocket*). Look here, I'm sick of this. I'll give you thirty shillings for your old bike and not a penny more. Them's my last words to you.

MICKEY. Yes, sir. Thirty-five shillings, sir?

JOSEPH (*starting to put the notes back*). Thirty shillings.

MICKEY (*his hand out*). Yes, sir.

JOSEPH. It's a bargain?

MICKEY (*taking the notes*). Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. You'll never regret it and Hyacinth will never regret it; you're getting the world's bargain.

JOSEPH. When will you bring it?

MICKEY. Give me till tomorrow night, sir. I'll enamel it tonight and 'twill be dry by morning. Then I've to scrub the old bell and give the whole contraption a general overhaul.

JOSEPH. And not a word to Hyacinth,

mind. I want it as a sort of surprise.

MICKEY. I know, sir. Not a word. I'd like to see the lad's face when it's put into his hands, he'll be wild out.

JOSEPH. He will.

MICKEY. Good-night then, sir, and many thanks.

JOSEPH. Good-night, Mickey. You're a good lad.

MICKEY. I try to be, sir.

*(He goes. JOSEPH paces the room in satisfaction. DOLLIE comes in.)*

DOLLIE. What was Mickey Roche wanting, Joseph?

JOSEPH. I'm pleased with myself, Dollie; I'm pleased with myself. I'm after doing a stroke of business with Mickey Roche.

DOLLIE. What business could you do with that lad?

JOSEPH. Coming back from the walk after leaving the boys in the Pavilion I dropped in to see Mickey. I've been bargaining for weeks with him over a bicycle.

DOLLIE. You're buying yourself a bicycle? That's grand, Joseph.

JOSEPH. Not at all. It's a lad's bicycle. It's for little Hyacinth.

DOLLIE *(looking dismayed)*. For Hyacinth?

JOSEPH. Mickey's outgrown it — he never rode it much and it looks all right. He wanted three pounds for it; he came down to two —

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

when he saw thirty shillings in my hand he couldn't resist.

DOLLIE. Where would you get thirty shillings to fling away on a bike for Hyacinth?

JOSEPH. Oh, I've been gathering it this long time since I gave up the smoking. Hyacinth's restless, I think; the other lads are too old to be companions for him. Now he'll be able to go off for little rides for himself — that is, after the Intermediate is over.

DOLLIE. I wish you hadn't, Joseph.

JOSEPH. I thought you'd be all for giving him a little pleasure and outing.

DOLLIE. Yes . . . of course. . . . But — but — you're a good man, Joseph.

JOSEPH. Ah, nonsense. But mind, not a word to Hyacinth; I want it for a little surprise. Mickey has to touch it up a bit, he promises it tomorrow evening. A good bit of work, Dollie, a good bit of work.

*(DOLLIE sits down looking depressed.*

*HYACINTH comes in; he looks woe-begone.)*

JOSEPH. Don't stay up all night gostering with your uncle Con and Stan.

HYACINTH. No, Pap. *(JOSEPH goes out. HYACINTH sits down. There is silence, then a little sniff from him.)*

DOLLIE. What's the matter?

HYACINTH. Nothing.

*(But he can't keep back another sniff.)*

DOLLIE. There is something. What is it, child?

HYACINTH. I broke the bottle.

DOLLIE. The ginger beer — across the bows? You had a christening and you wouldn't ask me!

HYACINTH. Not the ginger beer — the bottle.

DOLLIE. What!

HYACINTH. I was putting it on the kitchen shelf and it slipped from my hand on the flags and it was smashed, and the little masts and all, and the wee tug broken across — and even Uncle Con couldn't put it into a bottle. It's dead, Aunt Dollie, and I only had it half an hour.

DOLLIE. What matter, child. Stan will get you another one.

HYACINTH. It won't be the same; it won't be the *Good Hope*. The *Good Hope's* foundered.

DOLLIE. Maybe tomorrow, now, or the next day you'll get the surprise of your life.

HYACINTH. Will I, Aunt Dollie? Better than a ship in a bottle?

DOLLIE. Much better; much, much better.

HYACINTH. If I could believe that.

DOLLIE. Did I ever deceive you?

HYACINTH. No, Aunt Dollie.

DOLLIE. Then trust me. Just you wait.

HYACINTH. I will.

DOLLIE. Then give me a kiss and don't let the others see you were sniffing.



BIRD'S NEST

ACT II

HYACINTH. No, Aunt Dollie.

DOLLIE (*stroking his head*). *(He kisses her.)* You poor little creature — and all your life in front of you.

CURTAIN

## ACT III

*The same scene, just twenty-four hours later. CON is walking about the room a little restlessly, smoking a pipe. A knock at the hall door is heard. He stands to attention. A minute later MATTHEW FOX comes in.*

MATT. Good-evening, Mr. Schofield.

CON. 'Evening, Mr. Fox.

MATT. Lovely evening, isn't it, after last night's rain?

CON. Ay. Take a pew.

MATT. Thanks. (*He sits. CON remains standing.*) My father told me you wanted to see me.

CON. Ay. . . . Did he tell you I've bought Springfield?

MATT (*laughing*). The Governor said he never saw a deal completed so rapidly. He said it was almost unprofessional.

CON. There was no reason for delay. I inspected the place this morning, Dollie and Josie came with me to give me the female line on things. The place is shabby, but it's sound; the size suits me; the price seemed reasonable. I happen to have the money handy so I fixed things up with your father in the afternoon —

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

I was professional enough to knock him down fifty pounds. He promises me possession in a couple of weeks when all the papers are in order.

MATT. Well, I hope you'll be very happy there, sir. I don't know the house myself except to see it from the road.

CON. It's a pleasant small place. I was born there. *(He moves about a little nervously.)* Will you smoke?

MATT. I don't smoke, sir.

CON. I see. Blast this pipe. *(It has gone out. He holds MATT a box of matches.)* Strike a light for me, like a good man.

MATT. Certainly, sir.

*(He does so and sits again.)*

CON. Damn it all, I've no gift of the gab. I've things to say to you, Matt — I suppose I may call you Matt?

MATT. Of course.

CON. Seeing that you're engaged to my niece. You are engaged to Josie, aren't you?

MATT. Well, more or less.

CON. More or less?

MATT. It's made a bit of a change to us both, my going to the West and she off to Vienna. I don't quite know where I stand. We talked of it last night, but didn't exactly decide anything. I haven't seen her since.

CON. I know. She told me. . . . Josie was greatly taken with Springfield, Matt.

MATT. Was she?

CON. Ay, being her mother's home and all. She's a home bird, not a migrant. She loves Inish and all about it.

MATT. That's what I can't understand. Of all the holes ——!

CON. She's ready to come out there and live with me.

MATT. What?

CON. Yes, live with me there and give up Vienna.

MATT. She'd be mad to think of such a thing.

CON. So I told her. But she's set on it. Seemingly her heart was never much in that science thing.

MATT. Rubbish. Look at all the scholarships she won.

CON. Ay. She's got brains.

MATT. It's not as if she'd never been from home. But four years at the University, they should have opened her eyes to the world and cured her for ever of Inish.

CON. She thinks this is her world — Inish.

MATT. Good Lord!

CON. But the point is — I have a decent pension, Matt, thanks to the arm being gone. I could give the two of you a home at Springfield, and your father — I was talking to him about it this afternoon — would be as pleased as punch to have you there and would take you into the auctioneering business and give you a good salary and ——

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

MATT. Josie suggested the same thing last night.

CON. I promise I wouldn't be much in your way. There's a sort of little wing to the house; I could live in it and you'd see no more of me than you wanted. 'Twould be almost like your own house, and I promise I'll leave it in my will to Josie.

MATT. I'm sure it's very good of you, Mr. Schofield.

CON. But — wouldn't you think of it, Matt?

MATT. Think of it? I didn't get a minute's sleep last night thinking of it: marrying Josie at once and settling in Inish for ever. I can't. I must get away, Mr. Schofield. This little place stifles me; it's always stifled me; I've hated it since I was old enough to hate anything. From the time I was fourteen I've worked like a nigger to get away and now at last I can go. I can't give up my chance, not even for the sake of marrying Josie.

CON. I see. . . . It's a pity. . . . I don't suppose you're very struck on Josie — in love with her, as we used to say long ago.

MATT. I had to think that out last night too, and I had to conclude that I'm not; and I don't think she's so gone on me either. She was ready to set me free last night and go to Vienna. I promised to marry her in a year or two.

CON. It's as I thought. You're at cross-

purposes. It's a pity; a great pity. The two of you would have been a nice match. You could have had a quiet life here with all your old friends round you.

MATT. I don't want a quiet life and the old friends. I'm sick of the Inish faces. You shook yourself free from Inish yourself, Mr. Schofield; you should understand what I mean.

CON. I should. I'm forgetting my youth.

MATT. But this all seems crazy of Josie. What will her father say? She's the apple of his eye. He was so proud of her: the way she did in College; the scholarships!

CON. Poor Joseph. I promised I'd break the news to him, and I'm no diplomat.

MATT. But if I don't marry her and settle here maybe she'll stick to the Vienna thing.

CON. No. Her mind's set on Springfield.

MATT. All he's spent on her is money thrown in the sea.

CON. I'll call her. *(He opens the door.)*  
Josie!

JOSIE *(heard off)*. Yes, Uncle Con?

CON. You can come in. *(She comes in.)* I've spoken to him, my dear.

JOSIE *(looking from one to the other)*. Yes?

CON. He's — he's not prepared to do it.

JOSIE. I didn't expect it. I'm sorry, Matt, I really am.

MATT. I'm sorry too, Josie. You'll never

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

see my point; you'll always think I didn't care for you, but I did and I still do.

JOSIE. I do see your point, Matt, and I care for you and you for me — but we just don't care enough. Our points don't coincide, like in mathematics — no, that's parallel lines — they never meet. It can't be helped, Matt. Anyway, we've been good friends for years and I don't think it's done us any harm, and we'll always be good friends, I hope; and here's my hand, and good luck to you.

MATT (*taking her hand*). Thank you, Josie. And the best of luck to you. I'll be back here every year for the holidays and at Christmas and Easter, and maybe in a year or two — who knows?

JOSIE (*smiling*). Who knows? Maybe you'll get homesick for Inish like Uncle Con here.

MATT. Ah! I'm afraid I'd have to be born over again and born different.

CON. Well, that's that, children, and I'm sorry for it. And now for poor Joseph.

JOSIE. He'll be in any minute, and he's sure to be in a fidget because the boys aren't in yet for their studies.

CON. When are they due?

JOSIE. They start in at eight.

CON (*looking at the clock*). Sure, it wants twenty minutes to that.

JOSIE. I know, but he gets worried when they go out after tea, unless he's with them

himself to keep them up to time.

(JOSEPH's voice is heard calling in an irritated way, "Maggie! Maggie!")

JOSIE. As if poor Maggie would know where they were!

MATT. I think I'll slip away, Josie.

JOSIE. I won't let you. Stand your ground. Help me to face the music. After all, you've given me up as much as I've given you up.

CON. Face the firing squad, Matt.

MATT. All right.

CON. Am I to open the ball, Josie?

JOSIE. We'll see how things turn out. Go if you like, Matt; it's my funeral — no, it's poor father's.

MATT. I'm not going, Josie.

JOSIE. Thanks. And stand by me, Uncle Con.

CON. I will. I'm pretty sure to get my share of the blame for buying Springfield and putting the idea in your head of going out there.

JOSIE. I think the idea was always in my head — not of Springfield but of never leaving Inish.

(JOSEPH comes in; he is very worried.)

JOSEPH. I don't know what's come to the house this evening, everything's at sixes and sevens. Maggie's in a sulk and gave me cheek. Not a sign of the lads and it close on eight.

JOSIE. I'm sure they'll be in any minute,



Pap, they're seldom or never late. Don't fret yourself.

JOSEPH. But, worse again. Hyacinth didn't go walking with them, he's away in some other direction.

JOSIE. Hyacinth?

JOSEPH. Away off with his aunt and Stan in a motor-car, no less.

JOSIE. Gracious!

JOSEPH. In William Slattery's old Ford. The guards saw them whizzing up Main Street just after the dinner — I had got back to the Town Hall at the time. Josie, what's the meaning of this?

JOSIE. I know nothing of it, Pap. They said nothing to me about it. I haven't seen them all the afternoon.

JOSEPH. How could you, and they careering the country? And the guards said Dollie was in her furs and a veil on her. Sure, she never gets into her furs except maybe once a year for something out of the common — a wedding or a drowning.

CON. Maybe she's made a match of it with Stan, and Hyacinth is being the best man. (*Laughing.*)

JOSEPH. Ah, rubbish. But I'll be bound that Stan is at the bottom of it all. Wild; no stability; a menace; a bad influence. I wish I'd never let him near the house at all. What time did yees get to bed last night?

JOSIE. I'm afraid, Pap, it was near two.  
Stan got talking —

CON. I took my share in it.

JOSEPH. I warrant you did. You're another,  
Con. How are the boys to do their work if they  
don't get a good night's rest?

JOSIE. Don't worry, Pap. It's only once in  
a blue moon such a thing happens. Stan will  
be gone in a day or two and Uncle Con will be  
in Springfield. Did you hear he had bought it?

JOSEPH. All Inish is talking of it. It's good  
to think of a Schofield back in the old place,  
Con, and I hope you'll be very happy.

CON. Thank you, Joseph.

JOSEPH. You'll maybe find it a bit lonely at  
first. It's quite a walk from the town.

CON. Oh, I'll not be lonely. Josie is going  
— Josie has promised —

JOSEPH. To settle you in? That's grand.  
But you'll have to hurry up, she won't be here  
more than a few weeks now.

CON. She — Josie — she —

JOSIE. Let *me* tell him. . . . Pap, it's awfully  
hard — you'll hate it — you'll be vexed with  
me and I wouldn't vex you for the world  
— and maybe I'm being very selfish — and —  
and —

JOSEPH. What's all this about?

CON. It's just that — that Josie —

JOSIE (*almost breaking down*). It's —

(*She stops.*)

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

JOSEPH. What's happened? Josie, is something wrong? Tell me. You know I'd never be vexed with you, child.

JOSIE (*in a very low voice*). I'm not going to Vienna.

JOSEPH. Not going to Vienna? The wire last night was wrong? My poor, darling child.

JOSIE. No, the wire was all right. But I'm not going to Vienna. I'm going to live at Springfield with Uncle Con.

JOSEPH (*after a little pause*). I don't think I heard you rightly, Josie.

JOSIE. I'm giving up Vienna. I'm staying at Inish with Uncle Con.

JOSEPH. Giving up Vienna? (*stunned*).

JOSIE. Giving up Vienna.

JOSEPH. Not going to . . .? It's impossible, after you winning the scholarship and all.

JOSIE. My heart was never in it.

JOSEPH. The cleverest — the — the most brilliant . . .

(*He can't go on.*)

JOSIE (*her arms round his neck*). I know, darling, and all thanks to you and the training you gave me from years back, and all the chances and the money you spent on me and —

JOSEPH (*breaking from her*). Blast the money! (*He moves round the room.*) I can't believe it. You'll change your mind, Josie; believe me

you will. This is a fancy your uncle has put into your head.

JOSIE. No. Uncle Con had little or nothing to do with it. I suggested last night to Matt that he should marry me and settle down there.

JOSEPH. And he wouldn't?

MATT. I'm going to Westport, Mr. Fehily. I've my own life to make, my career.

JOSEPH. Of course.

JOSIE. And it's all over between Matt and me.

JOSEPH. My God!

MATT. I'm very sorry, Mr. Fehily. I wish things could have been different.

JOSIE. I'm not exactly blaming you, Pap, but it was you forced me into science. From the time I was a child didn't I want to go in for music?

JOSEPH. There's little or no prospects in music in Ireland. Didn't I make enquiries from the Royal Irish Academy? I could see nothing much for you in music.

JOSIE. Nothing much — but something.

JOSEPH. Anyhow your music is all over.

JOSIE. Not quite. I kept up the piano as well as I could all the time I was in Dublin. I kept getting lessons.

JOSEPH. Where'd you get the money? Sure, you had nothing but what I gave you for your fees and your board and lodging.

JOSIE. Lately, I've been earning a little from

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grinds, and before that Aunt Dollie helped.

JOSEPH. Sure, Dollie hasn't a brass farthing barring what I give her for the housekeeping and an odd pound for herself now and again.

JOSIE. Well, I suppose I got the odd pound, bless her. But I'll have a piano at Springfield and I'll give lessons.

JOSEPH. Piano lessons! There's nothing in that, neither money nor fame. Giving lessons to the ignorant daughters of Inish publicans! Anyway, no one much plays the piano now, what with the wireless and the gramophone.

JOSIE. Maybe they will again. Pap, wouldn't it be grand if we could have a little orchestra here in Inish? Mr. Cornish plays the violin quite well and Miss Delany used to play the 'cello, and did you ever hear Billy Mick play the flute?

JOSEPH. Billy Mick! Your mother's daughter consorting with his like!

MATT. She's only joking, Mr. Schofield.

JOSIE. I'm not joking. Why shouldn't I "consort" with Billy Mick if he plays well?

MATT. I'll admit he does.

JOSIE. And his father plays the cornet.

JOSEPH. A third-rate bookie playing the cornet!

JOSIE. Don't you see, Pap, it would be a beginning. There are others, I'm sure, even in a little place like Inish. And there are good voices in the choir at the chapel, and Sister

Bernadette at the Convent is a grand trainer and ——

JOSEPH. And you'd prefer consorting with third-rate amateurs in Inish to Vienna and a grand career?

JOSIE. Yes. I love Inish. It's poky now, but it needn't be. We could make our own plays and our own music, and maybe have a sketching-class and ——

JOSEPH. I think you're mad.

JOSIE. It's from the little towns, the country places, the best things mostly come. Do you remember what Stan was saying last night? *He* doesn't find the country dull, but he gets his pleasure from his wireless and his books. But he's a bit — I mean he's sort of living on tinned food. I love tinned food, radio and the gramophone, but I want besides to grow our own food, to make our own music and plays, to ——

MATT (*derisively*). The Inish Symphony Orchestra!

JOSIE. Not yet up to the Berlin one, I admit. But — I'm going to try. And if it gives us pleasure — oh, I hate to think of Miss Delany's 'cello mouldering in its case and Mr. Cornish too slack and discouraged to buy a new G-string.

MATT. I haven't heard him play for years.

JOSIE. He'll play now; I'll make him. Pap, it's what I want; it's what I want.

CON. Let her go her own way, Joseph.

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You should be glad to think it's not taking her far from your door.

JOSEPH. Of course I'd like her to be near me. I'm getting old; I'll be very lonely when the boys have gone. But this — I never dreamed of this. I was so proud of you, Josie.

JOSIE (*putting her arms round him again*). I know, Pap, I know. And I'll try to make you proud of me in another way. And there'll be hardly a day I won't come in and see you, and you'll spend every Sunday at Springfield, and we'll send you in fruit and vegetables — won't we, Uncle Con?

JOSEPH (*breaking from her*). Ah, fruit and vegetables and eggs! I'd rather live on a dry crust and know you were doing great things out in the big world.

JOSIE. I know you would. That's what's making me so sorry. I hate disappointing you like this, but you'll have the boys; they won't disappoint you.

JOSEPH. You're more to me than the three boys.

(DOLLIE and STAN come in. DOLLIE is dressed in a coat with fur that has seen better days. She wears a grand, rather old-fashioned hat and a spotted veil. She looks exalté, rather excited and important. STAN looks full of mischief.)

JOSIE. Oh, there you are, Aunt Dollie. Where have you been?

JOSEPH. Yes, where on earth were you?

DOLLIE. To the Junction and back.

JOSEPH. The Junction? What took you there?

DOLLIE. William Slattery's car.

JOSEPH. I mean, what business had you at the Junction?

STAN (*airily*). A lovely afternoon and a pretty drive. We enjoyed it, didn't we, Dollie?

JOSIE. Why, Stan, it's the plainest road in the country.

MATT. As plain and flat as a ribbon.

JOSEPH. Is Hyacinth there? It's nearly time he was at his books.

DOLLIE. He won't be at the books tonight, Joseph.

JOSEPH. What do you mean? He's not sick, is he?

DOLLIE. No. He's away!

JOSEPH. Away? Away where?

DOLLIE (*a little wildly*). Away! Gone! Gone!

JOSIE. Gone? Aunt Dollie?

STAN (*hallooing*). Gone away! Mark cock!

JOSIE. Shut up, Stan.

DOLLIE. Escaped! Flown! Flown from the nest.

JOSEPH. What nest are you talking of? Are you crazed?

DOLLIE. This house, this room, the old lessons.



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CON. For God's sake stop cackling and explain yourself, Dollie.

DOLLIE. It's all my doing, Joseph; it's all my doing. You'll be ready to kill me, but I don't care. The letter came this morning.

JOSEPH. What letter?

DOLLIE. From — no, I mustn't tell you, not one of you. Wild horses will never drag it from me. You can stretch me on the rack and I'll never speak.

CON. She *is* crazed.

JOSIE. Stan, will you for heaven's name tell us what it's all about?

DOLLIE. He doesn't know, he doesn't know the address. No one knows but myself and Hyacinth.

STAN. We bundled him on to the train, Josie; the train for Dublin. Oh, Dollie's a deep one!

JOSEPH. What in the name of goodness was he doing on the train?

STAN. What you're apt to be doing on a train — going from one place to another. Just travelling, Joseph, travelling.

JOSEPH (*shaking* DOLLIE). Will you explain yourself?

DOLLIE. He's gone to sea, Joseph, gone to sea.

JOSIE. To see what?

DOLLIE. Gone! Gone for a sailor.

JOSEPH. Rubbish.

DOLLIE. He'll be having what he wanted, seeing the world, travelling the wide oceans.

JOSIE. }  
MATT. } What!  
CON. }

STAN. Ship ahoy! The anchor's weighed.

CON. He couldn't go for a sailor with those eyes.

DOLLIE. I've shipped him to Australia in a big sailing-ship, masts and masts and masts, and when he comes back he's to go into the wireless; his specs don't matter there.

*(There is consternation for a moment, then CON bursts into laughter.)*

CON. Dollie! I wouldn't doubt you. You're my own sister.

STAN. I was in stitches all the way back in the car.

JOSEPH. But — but —

DOLLIE. You did it all for the best, Joseph, I know. But it was breaking his heart stuck here and going for the old Intermediate, and then booked for a bank or some such nonsense —

MATT. I say!

DOLLIE. — so I wrote to — to one I know — unbeknownst to Hyacinth or anyone, and this morning the final answer came and it was all fixed, but he'd have to go at once or he'd miss the chance; so I packed the little bag this morning, bought him warm vests and pants,

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ACT

made him get into his best suit after the dinner, got him into the car not pretending a thing, and Stan and I whisked him to the Junction to catch the mail to Dublin.

(JOSEPH *sits down, too bewildered to speak.*)

DOLLIE. I used Stan as a decoy-like; Hyacinth would go anywhere with him. God forgive me for all the lies I told Hyacinth today.

JOSIE. But, Aunt Dollie, wouldn't all that cost an awful lot of money?

DOLLIE. It did.

JOSIE. Where did you get it?

DOLLIE. From the same place as I got your money for the music lessons; out of the house-keeping.

CON. Good woman!

DOLLIE. And I sold my last ring.

JOSEPH. The housekeeping? You've robbed me.

DOLLIE. Not exactly, Joseph. Were you and the children ever short of food all these years? Did you ever ask for an egg and it wasn't there, not even if the price of eggs was soaring to the heavens? Sure, every woman worth her salt saves a bit from the housekeeping and puts it on her back. I kept my savings for your children, for Nora's children. That wasn't robbing you or them.

JOSIE (*has to laugh*). Aunt Dollie, you're a caution.

DOLLIE. I am.

JOSEPH. How can you laugh, Josie? What's to become of the child?

DOLLIE. He's in safe hands, Joseph. You needn't fret; he'll be all right.

CON. Yes, I wager he'll be all right, Joseph. I saw last night he had in him a drop of his wild uncle.

JOSEPH. After all I've done for him!

DOLLIE. The one thing that fretted him was leaving you without a good-bye, and he cried and the train moving off. He waved his little hand and sent you his love and he'll write to you tomorrow before he sails.

JOSEPH (*jumping up*). I can telegraph, I can have him stopped. Where is he sailing from? Liverpool — Southampton — where?

DOLLIE. You'll never know till the sails are hoisted.

JOSEPH. I'll get him stopped in Dublin, it's not too late.

(*He makes for the door.*)

DOLLIE (*barring the way*). Only over my dead body.

JOSEPH. Out of the way!

(*STAN and JOSIE catch him and stop him.*)

JOSEPH. Let me go.

STAN. Quiet, quiet.

JOSIE. It's very hard on you, Father, but Aunt Dollie's right. He was always mad on the sea. Let the boy have his life.

MATT. He'll be away from Inish anyway.

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CON. Josie's right; Dollie's right.

JOSEPH. Are you all taking your own ways? Josie first, now Hyacinth.

DOLLIE. What's Josie done?

JOSIE. Never mind now, Aunt Dollie. I'll tell you later.

DOLLIE. The other boys, Joseph, are as safe as safe. They haven't an idea higher than a bank ledger. Excuse me, Matt.

MATT. Oh, don't mind me, Miss Schofield.

DOLLIE. But Hyacinth was different. He had wide ideas, as wide as the ocean.

JOSEPH (*sitting down again disconsolate*). He was always a good boy; he stuck to his books, and the schoolmaster said his spelling was beyond the ordinary.

STAN. Well, maybe that will stand to him in the wireless. Will it, Con?

CON. Likely enough.

STAN (*singing*). "A life on the ocean wave —"

JOSIE. Shut up, Stan; you've neither sense nor feeling. I wish you'd get out of here.

STAN. I accept the hint. Come on, Con.

DOLLIE. And I must take off my good clothes and make a drop of tea for Stan and myself, for I wouldn't look at that railway tea — as black as porter, and the buns pure sawdust.

(*She follows STAN and CON out.*)

MATT. I should be off too, Josie.

JOSIE. Just a minute, Matt, and I'll be with

you. (*She kneels by her father.*) Cheer up, Pap; this is hard on you, I know, we must just pray it's for the best.

JOSEPH. I'm — I'm bewildered. Have I done wrong by you all? Was I forcing you against your wills?

JOSIE. You did it all for the best; you're the best father that ever lived. It's not your fault if we don't all go the way you meant us to.

(*DOLLIE appears, her hat swinging in her hand but her coat still on.*)

DOLLIE. The boys are back.

JOSIE (*jumping up and going to her, in a low voice*). Did you tell them about Hyacinth?

DOLLIE. I — I hadn't the courage after the way Joseph took the news.

JOSIE. I'll tell them, I don't want them exclaiming to Pap. Matt, stay till I come back.

(*She goes out quickly.*)

DOLLIE. And there's a young gentleman to see you, Joseph.

JOSEPH. Who is he? I don't want to see anyone.

DOLLIE. I don't know him. A nice-looking young fellow. He has a letter for you.

JOSEPH. Give it to me.

DOLLIE. He kept it in his hand; he's hard on my heels. He said he'd only keep you a minute. . . . (*She turns.*) Come in, Mr. —  
Mr. —

## BIRD'S NEST

ACT

(CHARLIE DALY *appears*. *He is as like MATT as possible; good-looking, ordinary, well-dressed.*)

CHARLIE. My name's Daly — Charlie Daly.

DOLLIE. That's my brother-in-law, Mr. Fehily.

JOSEPH. One of the Dalys from Knockaderry?

CHARLIE. No, sir. From the West. You used to know my father well long ago. He gave me this letter for you. He was in the bank here twenty years ago.

(*He gives JOSEPH the letter.*)

JOSEPH (*taking the letter, opening and reading it; it is quite short*). "For the sake of old times . . . any kindness you can show my lad . . ." I don't quite understand.

CHARLIE. I arrived this afternoon. I'm posted to the bank here. Of course I don't know a soul in the place, so I thought I'd leave this note in the first thing.

JOSEPH. I don't remember — yes, of course I do. It was twenty and more years ago. Where is your father now?

CHARLIE. He's manager in Westport, sir.

MATT. Westport?

CHARLIE. Yes. It's a bit of luck for me coming East like this. Lord, I'm sick of the West.

MATT. I'm going there.

CHARLIE. God help you.

DOLLIE. He's got a grand position in a bank there.

*(The young men stare at each other.)*

MATT. My name's Matt Fox. How-d'ye-do?

*(They shake hands.)*

JOSEPH *(getting up, vaguely)*. Of course I'll do anything I can for your father's son. But this evening . . .

CHARLIE. You're busy. That doesn't matter, sir. Any old time you're free.

MATT. Mr. Fehily is — is rather engaged this evening. Maybe you'd come along with me. Where are you staying?

CHARLIE. At the Seaview, just for a night or two till I find digs.

MATT. Good. We'll go over there and have a drink and you can tell me all about Westport.

CHARLIE. Right. I can give you a few tips and some intros.—not that there's anyone worth knowing there. And you can give me the line on Inish.

MATT. There's no line on Inish. There's nothing to tell you.

CHARLIE. Why, it looks a darling little town.

MATT. Good Lord! Let's be going.

CHARLIE. Yes. Good-evening, Mr. Fehily. I look forward to seeing you soon again, but don't put yourself out about me, I'll be all right.

JOSEPH. Yes. Good-evening.

CHARLIE. Good-evening, Mrs. ——

MATT. Miss Schofield.



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CHARLIE. Good-evening, Miss Schofield.

DOLLIE. Good-evening.

MATT (*as they go out*). What bank has your father?

(*The door shuts. JOSEPH sits down again, broken.*)

DOLLIE. Don't blame me too much, Joseph, and don't blame yourself. You've nothing to reproach yourself with, and the other boys are as steady as steady.

JOSEPH. I know. I'll try not to fret, but it's hard, hard. . . . Call the lads in; it's nearly time for the studies.

DOLLIE. Yes, Joseph.

(*As she gets to the door PHILIP and BOB come in; they are subdued. JOSIE has warned them to be careful. DOLLIE goes out.*)

PHILIP. We're in good time, Pap. We didn't want to be late.

JOSEPH. Yes. . . . You're good lads.

BOB (*looking at the clock*). We've five minutes yet. Could we have a spot of wireless, Pap?

JOSEPH. If you like.

(*BOB goes and switches it on. We get into the middle of "In the Vienna Woods".*)

JOSEPH (*after a minute, dully*). That's pretty. What is it?

BOB. An old waltz; it's called "In the Vienna Woods".

JOSEPH (*in a low voice*). You great fool.

BOB. Never thought.

*(He switches it off and tries another station. But now we are into the last verse of "Shenandoah". They listen to it in silence. It stops.)*

BOB. It will be lonely without Hyacinth, won't it, Pap?

JOSEPH. It will.

PHILIP. Anyway, there's no fear of us going off with ourselves. I'll get that exam. like a shot, Pap.

JOSEPH. I'm sure you will.

*(STAN comes in wheeling a boy's bicycle; perhaps he rides it in.)*

STAN. Look, Joseph! A lad's bike. It's a bit of an old crock, but the chap that left it at the door said it was for you.

JOSEPH *(starting up with a cry almost of pain)*. Take it away! Take it away out of this!

STAN. What! W-h-a-t!

JOSEPH. Take it away, throw it in the tide.

STAN *(subdued for once)*. I'm sorry.

*(He wheels it out. The clock strikes eight; the boys settle themselves to work.)*

JOSEPH. I maybe won't see you again tonight, lads. I'm going to lie down on my bed. Good-night.

PHILIP. } *(subdued)*. Good-night, Pap.

BOB. }

JOSEPH. Don't forget your prayers. And — and say a little prayer for Hyacinth.

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ACT III

PHILIP. } We will, Pap. Good-night.  
BOB. }

(JOSEPH goes to the door, opens it, hesitates, turns back.)

JOSEPH. I can't face my room, and I can't face Con and Stan and their gabble. I'll stay here. I won't disturb you, will I?

PHILIP. Of course not, Pap. Sit in the arm-chair and rest yourself.

JOSEPH. I'll look out the window a bit. I need the air.

(He opens it and leans against the sill rather in the attitude of HYACINTH in Act I. He turns his back to the room and buries his head in his hands. The boys have started to work, they mumble a little over it and the Curtain falls.)

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